

**PRACTICING
THE
PRESENCE**

RALPH S. CUSHMAN



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PRACTICING THE PRESENCE

SPIRITUAL HILLTOPS

DEAR BOB

THE SHARING LIFE

DEALING SQUARELY WITH GOD

THE MESSAGE OF STEWARDSHIP

Practicing the Presence

A QUEST FOR GOD

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Inscription

These pages
are affectionately dedicated
to that increasing number
of men and women,
young and old,
who are determined,
with help from above,
to find God as Reality
through the practice
of the Presence .

.
Like Saint Paul in the desert,
Or Jacob on the hilltop,
Or Brother Lawrence in the kitchen,
Or Luther in Rome,
Or John Wesley at Aldersgate,
Or Jane Addams at Hull House,
Or modern men in London or New York,
Or wherever
To all those
who believe that God can,
through Christ,
be found real and near,
this book is inscribed.

R. S. C.



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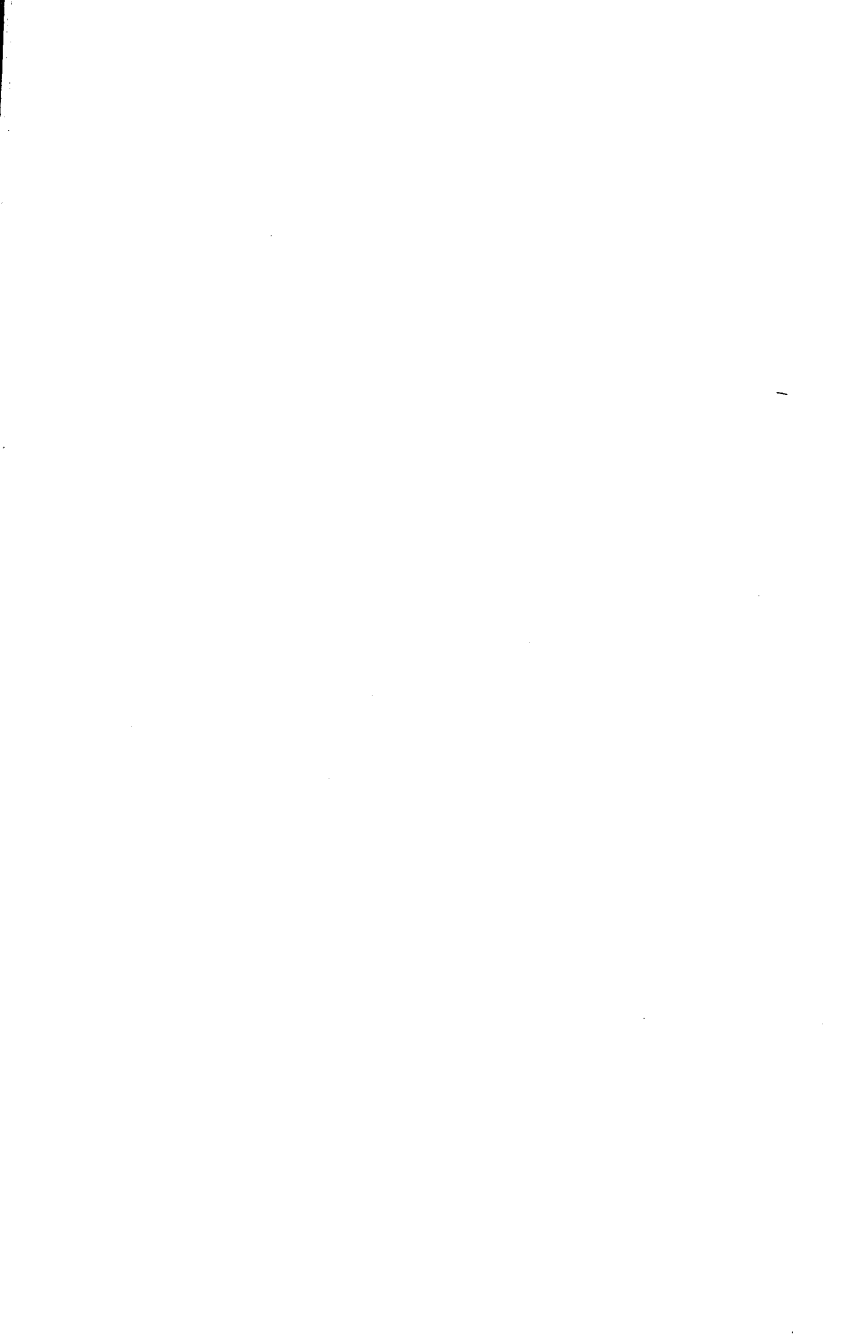
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The Sanctuary

I love to come to this still place
Where deeper peace is always found,
To kneel as though on holy ground,
And feel my Master face to face.

I do not know how I could live
If there were not this refuge sweet,
Where I could linger at His feet
And He to me sweet healing give.

But He will only let me stay
Until His peace has lifted me
Up where the dying world I see;
And then He sweetly bids, "Away!"

And I have found if I would keep
His presence with me all day through,
Then I must learn His will to do;
And in His harvest fields to reap.

O Christ, thou Lover of all men,
Thou unseen Presence ever near,
Create within me ears to hear,
And grant me eyes that see. Amen.

PART ONE

Lord, How Is It?

JUDAS saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?

- I. A YEARNING QUESTION
- II. AN AMAZING PROMISE
- III. THE CHRIST-PRESENCE
- IV. KNOWLEDGE PAST UNDERSTANDING
- V. GOD IS UNSEEABLE
- VI. THE SPIRIT-PERSON
- VII. GOD IN CHRIST

I

A Hearing Question

THIS is a quest for God. "How to make God real is my problem!"

A younger Christian was seeking help in his own quest for God, and in these words he stated to me his major difficulty: "How to make God real."

But he is not alone. This is every man's problem. It always has been. Perhaps it always will be—at least while we live in the flesh!

How to make God real? Perhaps it could be better stated. How can we help God to make Himself real—to us and to others?

For much longer than a year I have been almost haunted by a certain sentence of Scripture. It is in Saint John's Gospel. I have taken four of the words as the title of this introductory chapter, "Lord, how is it?"

"Lord, how is it?" This must be our cry if we are to make a success of our quest—just as it was the cry of another hungry and perplexed disciple who too was questing. He was asking Jesus, and he was terribly in earnest. Moreover, other disciples were hanging upon every word of the conversation. They were aware that their companion was asking the very question that was trembling on their own lips.

In chorus, these men in that Upper Room might have said, "Yes, Master, that's the question we want answered. Tell us that. Oh, tell us that!"

And it is my question too. This is the query that has been repeating itself to me day after day and night after night for months. "*Lord, how is it?*"

John is very careful to indicate that the Judas who made this earnest inquiry is not "Iscaiot." John seems to suggest that the disciple who was more interested in money and in the things of the world than he was in the invisible realities never could have spoken such words as these, "*Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?*" (John 14. 22.)

There is a yearning eagerness in that sentence, more perhaps than we can understand, removed as we are from that day. But if we are to understand at all, we must review the conversation and hear the statements of Jesus that led up to the question.

There is mystery here! But mystery is the Christian's native air. We are not afraid of it. It is well to remember this. Nor was Paul afraid of mystery. That is how he came to say to his fellow disciples that the things that are mysterious to the uninitiated are matters of common experience to the Christian. Disciples of Christ, Paul said, are to be "stewards of the *mysteries* of God" (1 Corinthians 4. 1).

Was not Jesus thinking of the same truth when He said to Nicodemus, "Can it be that thou art a teacher in Israel and you don't know these things?" (John 3. 10.) But there was special reason for the disciples in that Upper Room to feel that Jesus was dealing in mysteries. That mysterious declaration of His, "I am going away,"

had left them with troubled hearts, and the more so because He had added, "Where I am going you cannot come."

True, Jesus had attempted to comfort them by saying, "Let not your hearts be troubled; trust in God; trust in me" (John 14. 1). But always our minds hunger for more light!

So the conversation goes on, until Thomas—too often represented merely as a doubter—speaks out. We are thankful to him for daring to say what we ourselves, as we read, should very much like to say, "We do *not* know where you are going, and *how* can we know the way?" (John 14. 5.) And most of us are still more in the shadows after Jesus replies, "I am the way, the truth, and the life! no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14. 6).

We are able to grasp Jesus' thought that the main objective of life is "going to the Father"—discovering and knowing God. But again the mystery deepens for most of us as He continues, "If ye had known *me*, ye should have known the Father also. From this moment ye know him and have seen him" (John 14. 7).

For one, I can picture the growing perplexity on those faces. They were not yet ready to grasp the tremendously mysterious fact of God incarnate in a man, even though the man be as marvelous as their Master!

And, now, no wonder that Philip speaks out. We can sympathize with him, for he is a man like ourselves, pleading that God be made real to him.

He said, "Master, show us the Father; that is all we need; we want to *see* God."

How many of us are like that! And, too, we are like that after we have had available all the light which the New Testament has shed upon us and upon our fathers for so many centuries: We still demand that we *see* God and *handle* God!

But back of it all is the persisting question, How can we find God as Reality? The answer to this question is the quest of these devotional studies. I am writing out of the conviction that anyone can find the answer *for himself*, provided he is persistent enough—and will follow the gleam! If he will keep asking that question which the disciples asked—the question that has haunted me, “Lord, how is it?” “Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?”



Prayer

Eternal God, Quest of the Ages, we join the innumerable company of those who seek Thy heart. But we have sought before; we have sought and then forsaken Thee. The world of things has called and we have left the paths that lead to God, until sometimes we have doubted if Thou art. But something in the depths of us keeps calling back until we doubt our doubts. And we doubt our doubts because we know that when we close our minds to Thee the lights go out, the skies sink down, horizons narrow, life grows so barren, joyless, dead!

O Father God, we cannot do without Thee, and yet so often Thou dost seem so far away. It

must be Thou art the Life of every breath we draw, the Law that rules our minds, the Love that yearns within our hearts. And yet we are not satisfied with this. O bring Thy dwelling place closer to our own. It must be there is for us a closer walk with God, an awareness of Thy Presence which we have not known, a peace that ought to come with each returning day, a power divine that makes possible our dreams.

For we have dreamed; we have dreamed that sin shall not possess our souls, that heaven can come to earth, that nations may unite in world-wide brotherhood, that God may be the living, loving Father of us all. O Thou Eternal One, we cry in Christ's own name, Show us the Way. Amen.



Calling

I have heard it in the mountains,
I have heard it by the sea,
Where the plains are vast and vaster
I have heard it calling, calling,
Ever calling unto me!

In the night time I have heard it
Through the darkness and the gloom,
In the morning when the sunrise
Bursts in splendor through my room.

O what is it that is calling
In the mountains, by the sea,
In the nighttime, in the daytime,
Ever calling unto me?
O my soul, and can it be
It is God, and He is calling,
Ever calling unto me!

II

An Amazing Promise

HERE is an amazing thing! It was amazing first of all to those eleven disciples on that last and terrible night—that night before the crucifixion. It was in the Upper Room that this amazing message was spoken.

First, let us recall that Jesus had already made one startling statement. It would be startling to us too, if we should just take it as He said it. If we were not so careless in our reading of this sacred record!

He had said, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." And how they needed such a promise on that night of nights!

Some great sorrow was impending. That He was going away they were at last convinced. But just what this "going away" meant was not so clear. Perhaps it was death! Perhaps something else. Jesus had spoken of it as "going to the Father." In any case He was going away and their wonderful fellowship was threatened. Sorrow filled their hearts.

Then Jesus had startled them, even while He cheered them, by His promise that He was coming back. "I will come to you," He said, and "in a little while."

But now picture how their dawning hope for a reunion with the Master is swallowed up in mental confusion as He tells them this amazing thing:

"Yet a little while and the world seeth me no more, but ye see me" (John 14. 19).

Such an impossible thing: His returning will not be evident to the world but to them alone! They must have thought, "He can't really mean that."

But while they wonder He repeats Himself in still more emphatic terms. The promise of His coming back is not to these eleven only but to all disciples: "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and *will manifest myself to him*" (John 14. 21). That was the amazing promise.

Let us read it again, "I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." Then it was that the little company broke loose with their version of "How can these things be?" The exact language we have already seen, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us and not unto the world?" (John 14. 22.)

The seemingly impossible nature of the promise was apparently the first matter of their amazement: How can it be possible for Him to appear to us and the world not see Him? Don't all human eyes see the same things? Do this man's disciples have a capacity for seeing and hearing that others do not have? Or is there a realm of existence or reality beyond the powers of ordinary human eyes to investigate? We may suppose that these questions, and more, came to the eleven men.

Do we not make similar queries—the cries of yearning hearts—and answer them too? We verily believe there is a realm, and not beyond the grave (as some have thought), in which Paul

pictured "the things which God hath prepared for them that love him"—things that eye hath not seen nor ear heard.

Must it be altogether the product of an over-active imagination that the ancient prophet should believe in unseen things and pray, "Open his eyes, Lord, that he may see"? Or that a modern should write:

I like to dream
From out my little window
On some frosty nights,
When eyes more clearly see
Inspired sights,
And ancient stars
Tell tales to me,
And speak in rapture tones
Of God's eternity!

.
I like to dream
From out my little window
On some lonely nights,
That there between the stars and me,
In glad full view,
Could I but clearly see,
Is my own little Jim,
And Christ a-loving him,
And all the other glories
Of our life to be,
Out there in glad full view
Between the stars and me.
O God, if only I had eyes to see!

Of course the details of lines like those must be pure imaginings, but the instinctive faith of millions that there is a world invisible—invisible to the mere human eyes—is too deep and wide to dismiss without careful examination. No, we could not dismiss instinctive faith in the unseen even if science and philosophy had not come along with their confirmations.

Of course those eleven disciples, when they inquired, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us and not unto the world?" didn't have the radio and some other modern discoveries, and so didn't know that the air is filled with voices—and visions too—which only those can hear and see who have the proper "reception outfit." If they had possessed the helps of modern science, it would not have been so hard for them to appreciate the fact that the spiritually transformed disciples of Christ can "see things" and "hear things" and receive communications which the spiritually unborn can never know. And yet how blind and deaf and dumb the polished product of our modern culture can often be!

Later those comrades of the Upper Room came to know from personal experience the fulfillment of the promise of their departing Lord, "I . . . will manifest myself unto him." We too may know!



Prayer

O God, how many things there are that we do not understand, may never understand; and yet forbid that we should remain satisfied with our ignorance. "When the fight begins within a man, the man's worth something." It must be so with our faith, that out of the struggles of the soul there comes the truest, realest, walk with Thee.

And we would walk with Thee—cost what it will—even the Golgotha Road, even the valley of

confusion and the dark hours of suffering—even Gethsemane! Oh, we would walk with Thee!

It may be we must go through the valley of bewilderment before we can climb with Thee the Mount of Transfiguration. Perhaps we must die unto ourselves before we can arise in resurrection power. But may we never be willing to go the easier way. Forgive us if we have taken our religion lightly; if we have thought to possess the riches of heaven without a readiness to pay the price—in hard thinking, in glad giving, in determined doing. Can it be that we have believed too easily, that we have merely accepted the temples of our fathers and have erected none of our own? Have we believed merely because they did? O Thou living Christ, help us to open our eyes that we may see—and see Thee only. So may we know for ourselves the way and the truth and the life. Amen.



The Heights

It seems to me the fairest flowers these eyes have seen,
With fullest fragrance and in colors rare,
Are those which drink the sweetness of the mountain peaks,
And flourish in the sunshine of the mountain air!

And can it be, my soul, that life grows strong,
That beauty deeper and more fragrant crowns our day,
As we, with tired feet but hearts undaunted still,
Push upward, ever upward, on our way?

What matter if the heights be hard to gain,
What matter if the road must steep and narrow be,
With every turn the fairer vision grows;
Lord, let me walk the mountain peaks with thee!

III

The Christ-Presence

ALONGSIDE that remarkable promise of Jesus, that He would manifest Himself to His disciples and not to the world, is another just as amazing which we must study in our quest for Reality.

Immediately following this loving assurance that Jesus seems to make to any truly loyal disciple, "I will love him, and manifest myself to him" (John 14. 21), He adds this still more startling statement: "My Father will love him, and *we* will come . . . and make *our* abode with him" (14. 23).

It is this use of "we" and "our" that is exceedingly astounding to the natural mind. How dare Jesus link Himself thus with the Heavenly Father; how dare He bracket His own name with the Divine One, and thus identify Himself so obviously with God?

From the beginning of Christianity various answers have been given to this perplexing question. Some have been reverent and some have not. How can Jesus Christ be both the "Son of God" and the "Son of man"?

As students of theology we have a perfect right to study as deeply into this mystery as the human mind can reach. But when we are seeking an answer to our question of how to make God real, it seems to need a different approach—even to "believing where we cannot prove," *even to the point of regarding Jesus as the divine and unique*

manifestation of the Father, and even to the accepting of the invisible presence of the Living Christ as the very Presence of God.

Certainly, this seems to be in line with Jesus' claims for Himself. Scrutinize His words; He surely did bracket His name with God's name as no other human personality has ever dared to do.

What else can Jesus mean when He says in one breath, "I will manifest myself unto you," and in the next, referring to the Father and to Himself (John 14. 23), "We will come"? Then He adds, "when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father." (See John 15. 26.) What can He mean but that He is identifying these three as One, the Divine One?

Moreover, He seems to teach that His disciples must do the same if they are to make God real. Is this not the reason why Jesus links Himself and God together in that high priestly prayer just before He goes out into Gethsemane?

He is praying that His disciples may know life—He calls it "eternal life." And then He bursts forth with that glorious explanation or definition of what real life is. While His disciples listen enthralled, He speaks to His Father, "This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, *and* Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17. 3).

"And Jesus Christ," let us say it again! Why is it not enough to say, "this is life to know God," and stop there? Simply because Jesus Christ came to make God real. So the person who rejects Jesus Christ as the very manifestation of the Divine Father thus at once creates a barrier between himself and God.

Oh, the mystery of the incarnation! Oh, the bold mystery that surrounds this Galilean who seems to be both man and God, who cries, "This is life eternal"!

What is? This is: not merely to know God, but to know God "*and* Jesus Christ." Or, better, to know God through Jesus Christ. This must be the road that leads to Reality.

The charm of the fourteenth chapter of John's Gospel grows out of our common yearning to make God a living Presence. Spiritual things are so intangible. Oh, that we might get closer to them! But in answer to that climactic petition, "Show us the Father," Jesus has only one thing to say—the astounding statement, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?" (verse 9.)

Are we not reminded of Frederick Faber's words—

"If our love were but more simple,
We should take Him at his word;
And our lives would be all sunshine
In the sweetness of our Lord."

Look at every one of those sentences in the early part of the chapter. They all say the same thing: Jesus is the divine revelation of the Father God, the Christ-Presence.

There is divine yearning in our Lord's appealing answer, "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? . . . believe me for the very works' sake" (verses 10, 11).

But how hard it is to believe where it is so difficult to understand! *But it is still more difficult to reject words such as these:* "I am the way, the

truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14. 6).

"If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also; and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him" (verse 7). "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me and I in you" (verse 20).

So it appears, according to New-Testament scripture, that we will be greatly handicapped in our quest for God unless at the start we are ready to accept the "higher view" of Jesus—that He is the very Presence of the Father.

"How is it," said a Jewish rabbi to me a few years ago, "that you pray just as if you were talking to God and that He were right by your side?"

Is not the answer this—that Jesus, the living Christ, makes God real?

This liberal rabbi held a reverent attitude toward Jesus as "the great prophet of Nazareth," but he did not know Him, as I knew Him, as the risen Lord, the Holy Spirit, God's invisible Presence.



Prayer

O God, our hearts hunger for Thee: "My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God." Didst Thou not put this longing within us? Didst Thou not say, "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst"? Then why dost Thou remain hidden to our yearning eyes?

Can it be that Thy great glory is too much for

mortal vision; or that we are as yet mere babes in Christ with our spiritual eyes hardly opened and our sight untried?

Or perhaps we have sought to see Thee too easily, have been unready to climb the rough road to the Mount of Transfiguration and there to behold "Jesus only." Or it may be that some sin or word or thought or deed keeps us from becoming faithful stewards of the vision beautiful. Is it that the fickleness of our hearts or the worldliness of our minds prevents us from being fit vessels for Thy holy Presence?

O God, leave us not to ourselves, take not Thy Holy Spirit from us. O clear the scales from our eyes, that we may see ourselves as we are, and, seeing, may flee with greater earnestness to Thee. O save us e'er it be too late! For Jesus' sake. Amen.



Lonesome

Dear Master, I am lonesome;
Dear Master, speak to me!
I've been longing here at twilight
For the voices across the sea,
And it seems as if my heartache
Would be hushed, less piercing be,
If Thou, Lord, wouldst come still closer.
I am lonesome—speak to me!

I've been thinking in the stillness,
As I've watched the sunset glow
Die out yonder on the hilltop,
Leaving naught but cold and woe;
I've been thinking of the faces
That have come a-trooping by,
Old-time faces, long-time vanished,
Leaving me to sit and sigh;

And I'm lonesome, Lord, I'm lonesome,
Come Thou closer, speak to me,
As I sit here in the twilight
Listening beside the sea,
For it seems as if my heartache
Would be hushed, less piercing be,
If Thou, Lord, wouldst come still closer.
I am lonesome—speak to me!

IV

Knowledge Past Understanding

WE must not misunderstand that midnight appeal of the Upper Room, when the eleven disciples joined in the cry, "Lord, how is it?"

It was indeed an appeal and not a complaint. There is a difference. To me it is the difference between the stupid, skeptical reply of a Nicodemus, "How can these things be?" (with the implication, "they cannot be"), and the cry of another, "I believe; help thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9. 24).

It was faith asking for help! And faith has a right to ask. Indeed, it wouldn't be faith if it didn't ask. It would be mere credulity or superstition, accepting without thinking.

Yes, faith has a right to ask for foundations to stand upon. Faith will transcend the intellect but it never ignores the intellect. It is true that in the last analysis

"We have but faith; we cannot know,
For knowledge comes from things we see."

And yet knowledge "comes from Thee." And because knowledge comes through God-given eyes and other senses, with an intellect behind them, we have the first and also the last reason why a religious man should never neglect them. They are God-given. The disciples of Christ must never rest in mere credulity.

Here also is the fundamental reason why there

should be no conflict between science and religion. When at their best, both of these insist that all knowledge shall have been subjected to the most careful scrutiny that the mind can give.

And yet *there is a knowledge that passeth understanding*—that does not ignore the mind but transcends the mind. As Plato said, “There are some truths that are too big to enter by the narrow slit of reason.” And Rousseau adds, “The heart has reasons which the reason cannot know.” This is Jesus’ claim to Nicodemus, that there is knowledge that defies explanations!

For instance, the resurrection is God’s proclamation that the intellect and the five senses are never to be ignored; that man has a right, and must use his right, to test truth and alleged facts in the laboratory of the mind. Christ appeared to the eyes and ears and hands of the disciples on that first Easter morning.

But the resurrection is also God’s proclamation that it is reasonable for the human mind to conclude that there is a realm of life and being that rises above the understanding of the mortal mind and the grasp of the physical senses. There is a knowledge that passes understanding. If this were not so, there would be no religion.

So when Jesus said to His disciples, “I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more, but ye see me,” it was a perfectly reasonable and believable statement to these whose minds had already been gripped by the Master, even though the promise of this wonderful Friend was beyond

their understanding. A few moments before Jesus had told them the reason why "the world" would not believe in His coming back. It was because "it seeth me no more," He said.

Oh, why will "the world" be so stubborn about believing in *the reasonableness of the unseen*? In fact, how unreasonable it is to confine our knowledge to the data gathered by the five senses! There is so much evidence of a sixth sense—yes, and a seventh and an eighth.

I shall never forget how stupid a friendly group of Russian Communists seemed a few years ago in Russia as we questioned them as to why they were fighting religion. The best answer they could give was, "We don't believe in anything we can't see and handle."

Make all the excuses for the Communists that you can (because they were the victims of a lopsided church), yet in their answer they were just stupid and dwarfed. How little they knew of the life abundant! But we hasten to add that we do not have to go to Russia to find those who imprison themselves in their five senses. America has multitudes of such.

But the disciples of Christ were not in this category. They *believed*! Even though they could not see and touch, yet they had the will to believe.

"I will not doubt, though all my ships at sea
Come drifting home with broken masts and sails;
I shall believe the Hand which never fails,
For seeming evil worketh good for me;
And though I weep because these sails are tattered,
Still will I cry, while my best hopes lie shattered,
I trust in Thee!"

Even though they could not understand they believed. But they wanted to understand! And they wanted to understand because they felt that they could believe more fully if they did understand. What they wanted was more knowledge of how to make God real. They thought if they could only *see* Him, God would be more real to them. They made the mistake that millions have made. But their mistake was not the result of unbelief or lagging loyalty. Whatever happened they would never quit their quest for God. So we must not forget that a lofty loyalty may exist even among those who are disappointed and sometimes defeated, and whose quest for reality is still in the shadows.

So I say we must not misunderstand that midnight appeal, "Lord, how is it?" As these words have sung themselves over and over again in my mind it has seemed to me that this is more than the complaint of one who refused to believe until he could understand; rather, it is the cry of a hungry man who was asking to be led into the reality of the Invisible. This hunger can be put into these words: "Show us how we can have spiritual eyes. Show us how we can see the Unseen. Show us how we are going to see Thee, Lord, while the world of men about us remains blind."

And the time came when these questions were answered. Out of the experience of those first disciples we may learn. For the Spirit will teach us. But not until we really are determined that we will seek until we find.

Prayer

O Thou living Christ, we pray Thee to press Thy life in upon our lives. We need Thee so! We need to hear Thee whisper, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." We believe Thou hast. But "Lord, how is it?"

Thou hast given us a love for the Kingdom. We pray with passion, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth." And more than for anything else, we long for the new earth, the better world, in which all men will hate sin in all its forms, in which ignorance and poverty, greed and arrogance, shall not longer reign.

But, O Christ, the coming of Thy kingdom is so slow! Sometimes we almost doubt; we almost grow discouraged. Sometimes we almost lose faith in the heaven that will leaven the whole lump, in the salt that will save the world from its rotteness. And then we look within! O rescue us, dear Christ, from the sin and selfishness that corrupts within. Keep us steady in the hour of temptation. Help us to learn that without Thee we can do nothing. Take not Thy holy Presence from us. Give to us the faith that overcomes the world. Amen.



Faith

I will have faith

However dreams are shattered;

I will have faith that righteousness can live;

I will have faith e'en when my heart is breaking,

To work and pray and give!

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I will have faith
When troubled is life's ocean,
When low-blown clouds the Pilot's face shall hide;
I will have faith when my fair ship is battered;
I will await the turning of the tide!

I will have faith
That God is still in heaven;
I will have faith that He is by my side;
I will have faith though every star is darkened,
That He and truth abide!

V

God Is Unseeable

God is unseeable. In our search for Reality we must especially remember this. Here, I think, is another of the conditions that we must accept before we can expect to experience God as the real and near Presence that He is.

“Speak to Him, thou, for He hears, and
Spirit with Spirit can meet—
Closer is He than breathing, and
Nearer than hands and feet.”

To me these lines from Tennyson have been among the most precious in our language. I doubt not they have helped others as they have me. They mean that God can and does speak to us! But it is God as the great and Holy Spirit—the Invisible Presence—who speaks to us. Let us remember this. Let us spell “Spirit” with a capital letter.

It is too bad that so many parents and church-school teachers have allowed the children under their care to grow up with the mental picture of “the big-man God.” Instead of showing how God made man in his own image, we have too often helped the children to make God in man’s image. And the consequences are tragic, especially in later life.

John distinctly says, in that wonderful prologue to his Gospel, “No human eye has ever seen God: the only Son who is in the Father’s

bosom—He has made him known.” (John 1. 18—Weymouth). As a child I used to think it was because God was so far away that we couldn’t see Him. Now I know that it is because He is so near. And we shall not forget that Jesus was John’s teacher. We must suppose that from his youth this beloved disciple was brought up in the fear of God, but it was not until those years of his comradeship with the Master that he came really to know God, not as “the big-man God”—away off somewhere in the skies—but as the Heavenly Father, the near and living Presence. So it was out of his own experience that John said, “No human eye has ever seen God.”

So I think Jesus made it plain to His disciples that He was grieved at the materialistic way in which the masses of His people pictured “the big-man God.” And this after centuries of effort on the part of prophet and priest to wean their countrymen away from the worship of images and idols.

“God is Spirit,” Jesus insisted over and over again, “and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4. 24). Any other conception of God would hinder the worshiper in making God near and real. It is always so.

Jesus was grieved at their materialistic conception of God, not only because it was akin to idolatry, but because it tended, in the minds of the worshipers, to make the Almighty merely a local God, whose dwelling place would be limited to some spot favored by the particular worshiper. “Our fathers worshiped in this mountain,” said

the Samaritan woman to Jesus, "but you Jews say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem."

Jesus' reply is illuminating: "The time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem" (John 4. 21).

Then Jesus explained, "The time is coming—indeed, is now come—when *true* worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for, indeed, the Father desires such to worship him" (John 4. 23—Moffatt).

"Spirit of God, descend upon my heart;

Wean it from earth; through all its pulses move;

.

I ask no dream, no prophet ecstasies,

No sudden rending of the veil of clay,

No angel visitant, no opening skies;

But take the dimness of my soul away."

That is the prayer we need—"Take the dimness of my soul away." But there are conditions to be met before God can answer this prayer.

Now, we might as well admit that it is not easy to worship God "in spirit and in truth." It is more difficult to make a mental picture of the unseen than of the seen. We may warn teachers against fixing in the minds of the children the picture of "the big-man God," but it is not easy to avoid this. It requires wisdom and faith and spiritual experience to make real the Invisible.

But it is not impossible. *When you see the necessity, it is not impossible.* Perhaps those persons who have never enjoyed physical eye-

sight will more easily show us how. Thus Helen Keller, in asking Phillips Brooks to talk with her about God, told him first how at times she felt a great Presence near her—*like a warmth!* “Like a warmth” may be a rather vague description of God but it is far better than “the big-man-God” conception, and for the excellent reason that it suggests an invisible Presence, comforting and real.

The fact is that even in the Old-Testament times the great souls who to any degree “made God real” discovered Him as unseen spiritual Reality and so worshiped Him “in spirit and in truth.” Thus the psalmist wrote these memorable words, evidently out of his own experience, “Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there: if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me” (Psalm 139. 7-10).

The truth behind this fine statement is simply that the writer had so continuously communed with God that communion had become the habit of his life; and wherever he went he carried with him the consciousness of the unseen Presence. He could say with the pagan poet and with Paul, “In him we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17. 28). Yes, he could say this even though the mystery of it all staggered his mind. “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,” he said, “it is high, I cannot attain unto it” (Psalm 139. 6). Yet, in spite of mystery, he goes on to utter the fine words

we have quoted: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?"

As I write these words it is an early May morning in Estes Park. The sun is shining through clear blue skies on these noble Colorado mountains. A sublime silence is over all. Springtime has laid its freshened colors everywhere. Patches of light-green aspen intermingle with the darker pines. Longs Peak lifts its snow-capped head fourteen thousand feet on high, while in the opposite direction the Mummy Range towers heavenward, a mass of white. Mountain birds are singing around me. It would not be possible to describe the beauty and majesty of these mountains on this lovely Sunday morning, nor the depth of emotion that comes to me as I sit here upon an ancient boulder in the presence of the Creator, my Lord and my God!

But there isn't any sense in thinking that everyone who comes into this mountain country finds God here. It would seem that all must give Him a passing thought; but the tragedy is that so many come and go merely admiring the majesty of His mountains while thinking of Him as the absentee or far-away God. Blessed is the man who has learned to think of Him as a living Presence, invisible but real!

"Where the lofty mountains tower
In their majesty sublime
As they've stood for countless ages
Silent sentinels of time,
We are prone to look and wonder
As we daily press the sod;
You may call it admiration,
But I answer, 'It is God!'"

Prayer

O God, out of our need we cry unto Thee. Give us faith in the nearness of Thy Presence. Help us to believe. Not because of our knowledge of Thee but because of the nearness of Thee—in the air we breathe, in the rising of the morning sun, in the colors of the evening sky, in the many mercies of each day, in the still small Voice.

May we not be more anxious to understand Thy nature than to be surrendered to Thy will. Help us to yield ourselves to Thee in body, mind, and spirit. Help us to know ourselves. Show us that if we live to the flesh, we shall of the flesh reap corruption, but that if we live in the spirit we shall of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

Be gracious unto us when we are tempted to cease from the spiritual struggle and to live merely in the things of sense. Help us to realize that eternal issues are then at stake. May we feel something of what it means that Thou art calling us, out of our sinfulness into Thy holiness, out of our earthliness into Thy heavenliness, out of our fears into Thy peace, out of our death into Thy life. O give us of Thyself, dear God, for Jesus' sake. Amen.



The Search

I said,
 "God, if I could but see Thy face,
 Could really touch Thy hand,
 Or hear Thy words of grace,
 It would suffice; I should believe,
 If, walking some enchanted sod,
 I could behold the face of God!"

And so a sign I sought,
(And sought in vain!)
Thinking to reveal His face,
And wandered far by sea and main;
Until one day I learned,
When all my hopes were spurned,
The Face I thought must be sublime
Was never seen by man at any time!

Right there the vision grew!
For more and richer things
Burst on my view:
One day, upon the busy street,
A lad I chanced to meet,
Weeping and sore perplexed,
And knowing not what next
To do; for fallen at his feet
Were bundles three or four
Fresh from the tradesman's store;
A broken bag, its contents sweet
Fast mingling with the dusty street!
What would his mother say?
(Once I had felt that way!)

Then to his aid went I;
And when at last content,
Toward home the lad I sent,
He turned to me and smiled,
Then shyly kissed my hand;
And lo! I do not understand;
But in that kiss and grateful smile
I glimpsed the face of God the while!

VI

The Spirit-Person

How shall we think of God? That is the question we have been considering. And we have been facing two alternatives, both inviting difficulties. We shall have to choose between them.

If we think of God as in a physical body, we are prone to make Him a limited and absentee God, far away. On the other hand, if we think of God as Spirit—as Jesus declared we ought—then, because spirits are invisible to mortal eyes, we have the great difficulty of making the Invisible Presence real. But there is another difficulty involved that we must not overlook. Some people can succeed in making the Invisible real, “as a warmth” or as “a gentle breeze,” but *with a loss of personality*.

It seems that here is a peril as well as a difficulty. To make the unseen Presence real and near, *and* at the same time think of Him as a person, the Supreme Person—that is our problem. This difficulty is apparent to me whenever I hear (as I often do) some earnest Christian speak of the Holy Spirit as “it.” How would I like to be called “it”—that is, by my professed friends?

We must think and pray more carefully than this if the Holy Presence is going to mean to us God, the Heavenly Father.

Notice how real all this is to Jesus. The holy, invisible Spirit is His “Father” to whom He speaks so naturally. He didn’t even find it necessary to

close His eyes, as we do, but He "lifted up His eyes to heaven and said, Father, the hour is come" (John 17. 1). Again in that same chapter there is no doubt that He sees into the invisible with spirit eyes as He says, "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them" (John 17. 25, 26). Yes, how easily Jesus seems to have talked "face to face" with the Father. But He urged this same intimacy upon all of us!

I suppose the difficulty in making the unseen Presence real *and personal* grows out of our failure, for one thing, to meditate as much as we should on *the invisibleness of our own spirits*. Frederic Lawrence Knowles has put this truth into memorable verse,

"This body is my house: it is not I;
Herein I sojourn till in that far sky
I lease a dwelling built to last
Till all the carpentry of time is past."

"This body is my house." I live in it. I use it. I color it and put my pattern on it. But it is not I! Yet how constantly we fail, unless we are on guard, to discern this, to recognize that the real person is unseen, and, indeed, is often unknown, hidden within "the house" of flesh and blood!

"Beneath the edifice that men call Me,
Whose minarets attract the setting sun,
Whose portals to the passer-by are free,
Abides another one."

In spite of the spiritual character of personality we are prone to define a *person*, at least to ourselves, as one who has a face and hands and body and some other *physical* characteristics. We emphasize the physical part of us.

And so we are not safe until we have made a new definition of what is "a person"—a new definition that recognizes that the distinguishing characteristics of personality are not physical but mental and moral and spiritual.

If we could finally settle this—that one is a "person," not because one has a physical body, but because one is a living spirit, made in the image of the Eternal Spirit, our Heavenly Father! I am a person and can claim personality not because I have a hand or foot, or a skull with a brain in it, but because I have a mind that can reason and create, because I have a will that can make choices and determine things, because I can experience emotions and discriminate between them.

This sort of meditation does not mean that in this world we could get on without a body. (Perhaps we shall need one in the next world too.) But it does help us to see how "This body is my house: it is not I." And it does help me to think of myself as "a person" not because of my outer but because of my inner and unseen character.

Now, if I can see this truth—that it is perfectly possible and reasonable to think that a "person" can exist altogether apart from a physical body—then it will be easier for us to conceive of that great and holy Spirit, whom Jesus called the Heavenly Father, as the Supreme Person who has

created us all in His own image, and yet who must be to us the unseeable Spirit.

Evidently, we must grow spiritual eyes and ears and minds if we are to have companionship with a spiritual God and are to explore a spiritual universe. And Jesus seems to teach that the only way to grow spiritual sensibilities is by experiencing a spiritual birth and then growing up in the spiritual life.

Moreover, as we shall try to show in the next chapter, it is the Christ who has thrown wide the door into this spiritual conception of the universe and of the Creator. He is the way unto the Father. We should meditate more upon Saint John's words: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John 1. 18). It is to this spiritual Christ who—in a way unknown to us—is one with the Father, that the poet prays:

"Mid all the traffic of the ways—
Turmoils without, within—
Make in my heart a quiet place,
And come and dwell therein:

.
"A little place of mystic grace,
Of self and sin swept bare,
Where I may look upon Thy face,
And talk with Thee in prayer."



Prayer

O Lord, our Lord, out of the depths cry we unto Thee. Out of the depths of our need and

out of the depths of our ignorance do we cry unto Thee. Of old hast Thou laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. All of these shall wax old as a garment but Thou art from everlasting to everlasting.

How can we understand such as Thou art, and how can we come close to Thee? Clouds and darkness are round about Thy dwelling place. The thoughts of God seem too high for us. Yet we rejoice that righteousness and love and fatherliness are the foundations of Thy throne. Thou hast not created us to be orphan children. In the midst of our confusion of mind and heart, in the midst of our ignorance and sin we have heard a Voice; and it has seemed like the voice of a Father seeking his children. O Thou Eternal Spirit, help us to draw near unto Thee.

We do not understand why it should be so difficult for us to find Thee, or for Thee to find us. Why hast Thou so placed a veil of flesh between us? It must be for some good reason known unto Thyself. Is it because we cannot endure the brightness of Thy glory? Is it because we must first view as through a screen Thy great purity and beauty and Thy great compassion? But we have not been left without hope. In our darkest bewilderment the Voice does keep calling. We have heard it from the pages of the past, from prophet, priest, and poet. And our fathers have heard. They too were crying in the night; they too were crying for the light.

O Christ, we turn to Thee. As we watch Thee, as we listen to Thy voice, as we sit with Thee

in sweet communion, the light begins to break through our darkness and God seems near. Forgive our stupid doubts. Increase our faith. Help us to keep surrendered. O Thou living Lord, abide with us lest we die. Amen.



Gift of Gifts

Life is worth while, dear God,
To those who know
This rich companionship with Thee;
Each morning as the day flames forth,
Each evening in a sweet tranquillity.

Ten million million gifts
Spring from Thy hand,
Of up-flung mountains, evening skies, a tree!
Yet never one can quite compare with this—
The giving of Thyself to me!

VII

God in Christ

How easily Jesus speaks of the mysterious things that are so difficult for us! His words remind us of Tennyson's meditation over a flower:

"Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies;
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand;
Little flower—but *if* I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is."

Just so, "but *if* I could understand"! Yes, if I could really comprehend the truth behind these words of Jesus, so easily spoken, how it would unlock to me the mysteries of the universe, and of God Himself! For instance, how deep is the mystery behind the following verses of scripture:

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you" (John 16. 7).

And, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself. . . . He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine. . . . A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father" (John 16. 13-16).

Mystery! Mystery! But in spite of the mysterious in these words there are some plain truths here possible to accept even though we may not

understand. First, it was to their advantage that Jesus should "go away" from them—in *the flesh*. For, as the *Abingdon Bible Commentary* puts it (p. 1086), "The disciples could not experience the invisible Presence till the visible had been withdrawn." The Christ freed from the physical body would be able to manifest Himself more intimately to His disciples at any time and anywhere.

In the second place, this manifestation of the invisible Christ to His disciples was to be the manifestation of God Himself—a most important fact. But let us review a bit. It seems evident to me that there is such an intimate relation between "the Christ" and "the Spirit" and "the Father," that there is, in the mind of Jesus, no ultimate distinction at all.

The Spirit is the Father in action; the Christ is the Father manifest to His seeking children. First, He was manifested in the flesh. As John says, "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (1. 14). And then, after the ascension and Pentecost, He was manifested in a new way as the invisible Presence, "the Spirit of the Lord."

Well did Peter say on that great morning of Pentecost, "He [Jesus, the risen Christ] hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." (The Acts 2. 33—Moffatt.) It was as Jesus foretold: "When he, the Spirit . . . is come, . . . he shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine. . . . All things that the Father hath are mine" (John 16. 13-15).

Elsewhere I have said,¹ "The theologians may

¹ *Spiritual Hilltops*, p. 10. Reprinted by permission of The Abingdon Press.

separate the Christ and the Spirit in theology, but in the experience of the Christian, these two are inseparable. . . . It was out of their experience at Pentecost that the disciples discovered this inseparable relationship between the Christ and the Spirit. And it was because of this experience that Luke, in the Acts, and Paul, in his Epistles, used such interchangeable titles as 'The Spirit of Christ,' . . . and 'The Lord, the Spirit.' "

Now, let us go further and say that Christ and the Father are inseparable. Let us say even more strongly, that while theologians may separate the Christ and the Spirit and the Father-God, yet in our own experience and in the experience of a multitude of other Christians these "Three" are inseparably "One." Just as Jesus Christ came to be the manifestation in the flesh of the Father-God, so the Christ, after the resurrection and the ascension—no longer imprisoned and limited by a physical body—*continues* as the manifestation of God to those who love and obey Him. And this fact is important in our quest for God because, if the living Christ becomes real to us, God does. If "the Lord, the Spirit," to use Paul's phraseology, manifests Himself to us, we have experienced the fulfillment of His promise, "I will come to you." Moreover, we have found God the Father.

So when in this manner we experience Christ as the manifest God, there comes a new significance to His words, "He that has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14. 9); and to the cry of the writer of Hebrews, "Jesus Christ the same

yesterday, and today, and forever" (Hebrews 13. 8). And the same is true of Saint John's Prologue, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth" (John 1. 1, 14).

Thus it is that *our quest for God is really a quest for the Eternal Christ*. We seek not the historical Jesus but the historical Jesus *plus* the prehistorical and the posthistorical Christ. Of course language fails to fully describe Him or to confine Him. The apostle John has, it seems to me, succeeded better than anyone else, but even the majestic sentences of the "Prologue" leave us overwhelmed with the mystery.

But the moments when the *mystery* of Christ threatens my mind with unanswerable questions, I remember the *fact* of Christ. Then I repeat to myself the words of a distinguished scientist: "Knowledge and mystery have a habit of dwelling together but the mystery does not invalidate the fact." And my experience of Christ tells me that this is the truth.

Therefore, we can understand the testimony of many friends of our living Lord. For instance, the New York press reported some time ago Dr. William Lyon Phelps, of Yale, as saying, "Whatever may be said today about skepticism, there never was a time in the history of the world when the personality of Jesus was so appealing. My business is literature, but if I were to read only the new books about Jesus, I shouldn't have time

for the task. There is a new book about Jesus printed somewhere every day. But the supremacy of Jesus consists in this—*you cannot separate Jesus from God*. He is the only Person in history who seems divine.”

And this more intimate testimony from C. F. Andrews: “I have found in Christ’s friendship the one single support that has never failed throughout all trials and limitations. Life itself would have been entirely different if the sense of Christ’s presence had been absent and the joy of His friendship had been unknown. It is true, indeed, that I have failed from my side to keep the sacred tie of His friendship unbroken, and time without number I have been unworthy of His love; but His own great blessing has been given back to me in spite of all, and His love has never let me go.”



Prayer

O Thou, whom not having seen we love, help us to love Thee more truly. For perhaps we only think we love Thee. Perhaps our friendship has become a mere profession. It may be that if we would listen, we should hear Thee say again, “Lovest thou me more than these?”

Dear Christ, are we indeed honest when we answer, “Thou knowest that I love Thee!” Show us how to tell whether we say mere words, mere words! Perhaps Thou art just now saying to us: “Feed my sheep! Feed my lambs!”

How little we know about them! How little we

think about them! Out there in Russia, out there in China, out there in America; in the factories, in the tenement houses; out there in the sordid places; out there without God and the hope of life. Doomed!

O Christ, it seems that more than anything else in the universe, we long for comradeship with Thee. And yet we hear Thee say, "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and I will love him, and to such a one will I come and manifest myself." Even so, Lord Jesus, come and help us to be less unworthy of Thy love. Amen.



God of the Market Place

I love to walk and talk with God
Along some quiet woodland way,
Where blows the gentle morning breeze
And sunrise gilds the altar trees;
O joy, when in some woodland way
I can begin with God the day!

But joy still more to talk with God
Along the busy market place,
Within the city's constant din
Where men need God, release from sin;
O joy, when in the market place
I can discern the Lord's own face!

If on some holy mountainside
I hear Thy voice and glimpse Thy face—
Through all my years I'll bless the day
I met Thee on the mountain way!
But better still, dear Lord, I pray
That Thou wilt give me grace to be
In rich companionship with Thee
Along this busy market place,
Here let me see Thee face to face!

PART TWO

Seven Steps to Reality

- I. IT DOESN'T JUST HAPPEN
- II. HEARSAY RELIGION NOT ENOUGH
- III. NO QUARTER TO SIN
- IV. AWARENESS OF EVIL
- V. THE NEED OF TECHNIQUE
- VI. THE SET OF THE WILL
- VII. FAITH AND REALITY

I

It Doesn't Just Happen

"SAY, that didn't just happen, did it?" These are commonplace words, but I shall never forget them, or how they came to be spoken.

The place was an official board room in a church in Dayton, Ohio. We had met for prayer fellowship before the morning service. As a guest, I was speaking to these officials about the reality of comradeship with Christ, even to the end. As an illustration I referred to the triumphant passing of one of the manliest and truest men I have ever known. I told them how in his last moments he opened his eyes and said to the family gathered about his bed (and he said it with the same twinkle in his eyes that I had noted years before), "I suppose this is what they call dying." Then there was a pause, and the eyes opened again as he smilingly said, "Glory to Jesus!" The same Christ who had been real to him through life was real to him at the end.

Now, sitting on the front seat in that official board meeting was a man who evidently knew what that same fellowship with Christ is like. His face beamed as he spoke the words already quoted, "*Say, that didn't just happen, did it?*"

And I answered, "You are just right, my friend; that kind of fellowship with Christ doesn't just happen."

That is exactly what Jesus was trying to fix in the minds of His disciples. Making God real

doesn't just happen. That friend of mine wouldn't have found Christ real and near at the end of the road if he had not learned to keep company with Him along the way.

It is important, therefore, that we note this as a first principle. *In answer to the question, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" Jesus makes it clear that it doesn't just happen. If we are to make God real, there are some laws to be observed, laws just as fundamental as the laws that hold the stars in place.*

So I think that the twenty-third verse of the fourteenth chapter of John's Gospel is one of the most important passages in the New Testament for those who are seeking "to make God real," for it is here that Jesus plainly points out the road that those must follow who would know continuing comradeship with the living Christ and thus experience the "manifest presence" of the Father-God.

In the twenty-second verse let us recall again how one of the disciples became the spokesman for all when he asked, "Lord, how is it?"

Jesus' reply at such an hour must be of great significance. Hear Him: "If a man love me, he will keep my words," He said. And then He goes on to reiterate the great promise for reality-seekers, "And my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Evidently the first condition of making God real is obedience to His words.

This important statement is more striking because it really is a restatement of the promise

plainly said (verse 21): "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."

I must repeat those wonderful words, "I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." Think of it, the eternal Christ here promises to reveal Himself to His followers on certain conditions!

This, then, is the "experience of God" that disciples of Christ have witnessed about through the centuries. Both young and old, of every race and nation, have "experienced religion." Indeed, was it not this discovery of the nearness of the Presence that set Martin Luther aflame and brought on the Reformation? And was it not this same discovery of an experience of the Invisible One that made John and Charles Wesley the heralds of a new day for Britain? Yes, and for the world!

There is plenty of evidence that God in Christ does become real to some professing Christians. Then why not to all? Evidently, there are some directions to be heeded. There are some laws to be obeyed, if the Presence is to become real to any of us as the Comforter, the Father, the Saviour, the Holy Spirit.

As a first principle, therefore, isn't it quite evident that the finding of Reality "doesn't just happen"? No one can go along in the religious life carelessly, haphazardly, without deep purpose, and then some day, at some turn of the road, just *happen* upon God. No, that doesn't happen. First there must be a quest for God—an honest

quest. And every quest has a beginning; and the beginning is generally the result of a real decision "to take to the road" and follow to the end. It is the tragic fact that too often religion is "an inherited bit of propriety." I found that phrase years ago in a storybook. It shocked me. The author made one of his characters say, "The Church is full of members to whom religion is no more than an inherited bit of propriety." Is this true? Well, it does seem as if nearly everyone needs to be jarred out of that attitude. We need to set out on the road of making religion a great adventure of discovery! It is good to sing,

"Follow, follow, follow the gleam,
Banners unfurled o'er the world.
Follow, follow, follow the gleam
Of the chalice that is the Grail."

I remember how thrilled I was when I first heard that lovely song, but it is so easy to sing about following—and never make the start. And after a while we stop singing. No, the discovery of God doesn't just happen!



Prayer

O Thou who hast said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments," give us the needed grace to do Thy will.

We are what we are—weak, stumbling, doubting, fruitless—not because we have not known the light but because we have failed to walk by the light.

And yet our hearts sicken at our failures. One thing gives us hope: we are not satisfied to walk in darkness and defeat. We hunger for the living God. We long to be in tune with the Infinite. All about us we see the beauty and majesty and the harmony of the universe in which Thy laws have right of way. Oh, to what heights might we rise and to what peace and strength might we attain if we could only really surrender to Thy commands! O help us to love Thy law. Perhaps we never shall until we come to love Thee more, until we really see how God has loved the world in Christ. O Thou who didst always have compassion on the blind, have mercy upon us; help us to use the light we have, that we may gain more light—may more perfectly know Thy will and love Thy ways. In Jesus' name. Amen.



To the Evening Angel

Come to me softly as the night
 Climbs upward to my hilltop from the glade!
 Come like the absence of the light,
 Creeping around me slowly, finding me unafraid!

Gather thy dark mantle closer to me,
 But gently as the twilight closes day;
 Give me one star a-shining brightly,
 Leave me the mind that still can pray.

Then as sweet visions fade in slumber,
 And gleaming stars dissolve in dawning skies,
 Grant me the dreams of heavenly happy wonder,
 Fading in dawn before my closing eyes!

II

Hearsay Religion Not Enough

"WHAT this parish needs is a man who knows God otherwise than by hearsay." This is the greeting that the rough-spoken Thomas Carlyle gave to the new minister of Craigenputtoch. Perhaps it would be well if all ministers going to new parishes could be greeted in the same way.

Generally it would hearten the minister to know that there are laymen who want a preacher who can witness out of a first-hand acquaintance with Christ. Yes, it would encourage any preacher to find laymen who have discovered the difference between "hearsay" religion and a first-hand experience of the Presence.

Not that I would imply that "hearsay" religion is valueless. It is not. It is merely immature. We all began with hearsay religion. We heard it from mother and father and the teacher and preacher. Blessed is he whose childhood has been exposed to "hearsay" religion. Too many children grow up in homes where they are not exposed to any kind of religion—even in America.

But hearsay religion is not enough. We must grow up! Why not? When growth is the fact in every other realm of life, why not in the spiritual realm?

"O that I may grow!

I see the leaves outpushing hour by hour,
With steady joy the buds burst out a flower,
Urged gladly on by Nature's waking power.

O that I may grow!"

No, the "hearsay" religion of childhood is not enough. We must experience for ourselves what our teachers have been witnessing about.

This urge to attain unto an "experience" of our own is also the final challenge of the *Scriptures*. In the sacred pages the prophets and evangelists are bringing to us their experiences with God and Christ and the truth. It is not enough for us to give mere mental acceptance to what they say.

The person who boasts that he believes the Book "from cover to cover" is speaking childishly. The Scriptures were handed down to us not that we may accept by "hearsay" what others have experienced, but that we may be encouraged and directed to experience God and His truth for ourselves. Rossiter W. Raymond has put this into noble lines:

"Whene'er, O ever present Lord,
These ancient chronicles I read
Of those Thy human voice who heard,
Or touched Thy human hand indeed,

"Forbid that all my strength be spent
To prove them true or free from flaw;
Or idly pitch my slothful tent
Upon the truth they saw they saw.

"Nay, hold not thus Thyself aloof,
But come and walk and bide with me
That I may cry on highest proof
Not 'Yes, they saw,' but, 'Lo, I see!'"

Just at this point we should remind ourselves that Jesus' complaint against certain leaders of the Jews was their misunderstanding of the ultimate purpose of the Scriptures. Jesus said to

them, "You search the Scriptures because you suppose that in them you will find the Life of the Ages; and it is those Scriptures that yield testimony concerning me; and yet you are unwilling to come to me that you may have Life" (John 5. 39-40—Weymouth). It was not that those Jews failed in reverence for the Scriptures, but that they made them an end in themselves.

Thus it is that one great need of young Christians is to have a fairly true conception of what "inspiration" of the Scriptures means. The tragic consequence of teaching youth any theory of verbal inspiration is that they may come to believe that there is virtue in the words apart from the testimony. The danger is that the Bible may become a book of magic rather than the story of the experiences that men have had with God—and God with man.

The apostle Paul helps us with his ringing testimony, "I know him." So does Saint John when he says, "We saw it, we testify to it, we bring you word of that eternal Life which existed with the Father and was disclosed to us" (1 John 1. 2—Moffatt).

But John is very careful to explain that it is his own experience that he is talking about. Note those words, "*was disclosed to us.*" There is no hearsay about that. It is a personal experience that has come to John. He has discovered God for himself, and the discovery is too wonderful to keep to himself. He repeats it. "It is what we heard and saw that we bring you word so that you may share our fellowship."

And what is this fellowship? That is the heart

of the whole matter. Saint John answers, "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1. 3). It is significant that he added in the fourth verse, "These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full."

The truth is that Saint John and Saint Paul and others wrote down their experiences with Christ, not that their readers might believe with mere mental acceptance, but that we too might be encouraged to seek the same first-hand experience of the living Christ that they had discovered. The details of that experience would, of course, be different in each person, but the fact of the invisible Presence would be the same. The writers of the New Testament, therefore, seemed concerned not that their readers should accept their words but should accept their Christ. Yes, and through Him know the Reality of God!

Therefore, as a sound principle in our quest for Reality, *we must fix it firmly in our thinking that "hearsay" religion must be transformed into a first-hand experience of God in Christ. Nothing less will do.*



Prayer

O Jesus Saviour, we thank Thee that Thou dost manifest Thyself to those who hunger after fellowship with Thee. It is not the earthquake experience we have come to seek; it is the calm-giving quietness of Thy holy presence; it is Thy healing influence on mind and body and spirit.

Sometimes the burdens are so heavy, Lord;

sometimes we almost are afraid to face the day, the tasks pile high, responsibilities seem greater than we can bear, we shrink from decisions we must make; storms threaten. And then we come to Thee. Oh, why did we not come before!

Forgive our feverish ways. Forgive us that we are ever learning and never coming to a knowledge of the truth—the truth that Thy invisible Presence is our refuge and our strength. O help us to fix within our nights and days the holy habits of finding Thee. Amen.



Bread of Life

Feed me, my God, with spirit food
That I may live in Thee,
That I may grow like to Thyself,
Thine image, Lord, in me.

Ere I set forth upon my day
Break Thou to me Thy bread;
Pour forth Thy strength divine, dear God,
In gladness o'er my head.

And grant my faint and hungry heart
Thy food from heaven above;
O come, Thou living Bread of Life,
Reveal Thy gifts of love.

So may my years grow strong in Thee,
Fed with the Bread Divine,
The sweet compassion of Thy life
Be reproduced in mine!

III

No Quarter to Sin

"JESUS answered."

Oh, if we could only feel the significance of that answer! And the significance of the question that prompted the answer! Yes, let us repeat our statement that here, in the twenty-second and twenty-third verses of the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel according to Saint John, is found the key to the secret of making God real.

The spokesman for the disciples has asked the great question: "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?"

"Jesus answered." And the answer has seemed so commonplace that we have too little studied His vast meanings.

"If anyone loves me, he will keep my words," is the first part of the answer. Is this so? Is our *doing* the measure of our loving? Then how little we really love!

How like Peter by the lakeside, on that post-resurrection morning, are we! How unwilling he was to admit that his doings were the measure of his loving! He thought he really loved, but how miserably he had failed in those hours before the cock crew! No wonder that Jesus pressed home to him the question, "Lovest thou me?" And three times!

How many times would Jesus press the question home to us? It must mean more to really love than we have thought. But when we do come to

actually love—with all of mind and heart and strength—then the Master promises great results.

What are those results? First, in the disciple who so loves there grows the understanding of what Jesus meant when He said, "My Father will love him," and "I will love him." Love, of course, is an inner experience not apprehended by the physical senses. But it is real experience worth any cost. To know, to feel, to have the assurance, amid all the vicissitudes of all the days, that the Eternal Christ, the manifest God, has a personal interest and love for me—this gives a new calm and confidence and joy to life.

Those who have experienced this know that Frank Mason North has given a personal testimony in his hymn stanza:

"O Christ, through changeful years my Guide,
My Comforter in sorrow's night,
My friend, when friendless—still abide,
My Lord, my Counselor, my Light."

And so along with the assurance of God's love comes the assurance of God's actual presence with us. As Jesus said, "We will come to him and make our home with him" (John 14. 23—Weymouth).

To the uninitiated, or, as Jesus says, to "the world," this inner witness of the manifest Presence will mean little. But to the thousands, in every generation since Pentecost, who have made the discovery for themselves, it is as Phillips Brooks said, "The realest thing in the world."

How strange it is that we are so slow to believe that this "experience" is for us too! How

strange that it took John Wesley so many years to discover for himself the meaning of his aged father's words, "My son, the inner witness is the final proof of Christianity"! But what a difference it did make in Wesley when the discovery became his!

But we are trying to find the way into this Reality. Therefore, we must not overlook the fact that these assured results—that the Eternal God will come as a loving Father, an invisible but real Presence, imparting to us the conscious sense of His love and power and peace—*these results are promised on the unescapable condition that we love God in Christ sufficiently to obey His Commandments.* "He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings," said Jesus (John 14. 24). So, in the last analysis, it is love that finds God; but it is the love that obeys.

Now, in plain language all of this means that *we cannot tolerate any sin in our lives and hope to make God real. For sin is disobedience and sin is disharmony. And sin raises barriers and clouds between ourselves and the Father.* So it is that no one will discover God until he comes to hate sin to the point of repentance; and no one who has come to discover God as reality will expect to continue in this sure communion with Him if he gives any quarter to sin.

While Prohibition was in effect a New York City editor chided the ministers of the city in this language: "We are told on fairly good authority that there are many thousands of bootlegging places in this city and yet, in reading the announcements of Sunday's sermons in last

Saturday's newspaper, we could find only one minister who was preaching on sin." Of course the unfairness of this kind of criticism is evident. Nevertheless, there is a warning here as to the menace of sin. Fundamentally, it is not only the sin *outside* of us that we must hate; it is the sin *inside*. Yes, it is primarily the sin inside! This is why the following sentences which Dr. Leslie D. Weatherhead wrote to an English business man are so pertinent. I quote them from the Methodist *Times* of London. Many of us can sympathize with this business man who, in the midst of sorrow and reverses, complained that he could not find God real and near.

"A few blunt questions to you," wrote Doctor Weatherhead. "Are you wanting God but wanting to cling to some sin as well?"

Then the minister goes on with these kindred questions:

"Are you shutting God out of any area of your life? Are you too proud to let Him forgive you?"

"Are you just a wee bit afraid that if you surrender to Him, you may have to give up some things which you are not prepared to give up?"

"Have you a lingering doubt that the 'worldling' has a jollier time of it than the Christian? Are you afraid of what your business friends would think or say?"

"Would you have to change your business methods in a way so drastic that you cannot bring yourself to do it?"

"Are you wanting God with half your mind and worldliness with the other half, and so find your-

self in the conflict of a soul trying to live in two worlds at once?"

When one meditates upon questions like these it will be easy to see the meaning of the familiar prayer, "O God, whom only those can love who hate the thing that is evil." Is not this the reason Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"?



Prayer

O Christ, Searcher of hearts, look on us. Search our hearts this hour as Thou didst search the hearts of all who heard Thy voice or touched Thy life. Disturb us, we beseech Thee, as Thou didst do to Thy apostle by the sea until we too behold the blackness of our sins. Disturb our hard complacency, our hopeless satisfaction with ourselves, our prejudice toward those we do not like. Probe deeply into our secret sins. Probe not merely into the more hideous things that we remember, but deeper, Lord, into what we have thought of as no sins at all—our indifference toward our fellow man or the grudges we have held toward those we should have loved. Forgive us for those words we left unspoken, the tears of sympathy we might have shed, the kindly deeds we might have done, the compassion we should have felt. O Christ, our Lord, teach us that all unlikeness to Thyself is sin. And when at length we have clearly seen and deeply felt, grant us then the faith to know that sin need not have

dominion o'er our lives. For the glory of Thy holy name. Amen.



Saved

I

I ask Thee, Lord,
That when my days are done,
And I at last have gone
Beyond the setting sun,
Grant that Thy angels welcoming me
Into the mansions of eternity

May say not:

"Lo, here comes a saint of God!"
I then would blush,
Knowing full well the way I trod.
But this one thing
By God's grace may they say,
"Here comes a sinner,
Whom all hell did claim,
Who fought and fell
But clung unto The Name,
Who fought and lost
But rose to fight the same!"
So grant me in the end,
Dear Christ, to see Thy face,
That I at last may enter in,
Saved by Thy grace.

II

Thy Mercy, Lord, is like the kiss of dawn
When night has been an agony and pain,
As healing as the morning lights across the spawn
Of midnight storm and driving rain.
O Christ of Mercy, at Thy feet I fall;
I hail Thee Saviour—Thou my all in all!

IV

Awareness of Evil

IF we are to grow into the fellowship with the invisible Christ, the manifest Presence of God, we must not only "hate the thing that is evil"—that we know is evil—but we must develop an awareness toward the sins that are obscure. We must pray:

"Holy Spirit, all divine,
Dwell within this heart of mine;
Cast down every idol-throne,
Reign supreme, and reign alone."

Isn't this what Jesus meant when He said, speaking of His invisible Presence, "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth"?

Isn't a growing Christian one who not only refuses to give quarter to the sins that he knows are sins, but is ever on the alert to discover where unseen sin may be lurking?

But how slow we have been to permit "the Spirit of truth" to lead us "into all truth"—into the light—where some of our social traditions, where some of our economic and business practices, where some of our political attitudes would be revealed as disobedience to the word of God. And disobedience is sin! And sin, we have admitted, clouds the face of God. "If you love me, you will keep my commandments," Jesus declared.

But we haven't been very anxious to know what His commandments are or what they mean!

Haven't we become superficial Christians? Have we really walked near enough to Christ to expect to enjoy the comradeship of the Presence? It is so much easier to say, "O Master, let me walk with thee," than to emphasize the next line of the hymn, "In lowly paths of service free." It seems perfectly clear that anyone who is in earnest about making God real must not be satisfied with a mere casual consideration of the commands of Christ. For we were plainly told that success in finding the Presence real and near depends on the way we *know and obey* the word of our Lord. Yet how many of us could make a list of Christ's distinctive commandments? It is illuminating to try.

1. "*Love one another*" (John 15. 17). That seems to be primary with Jesus as He thought of the coming community of Christians. More than once He repeats, "This I command you, to love one another." He must have meant it!

2. "*Love your enemies*" (Matthew 5. 44) is another command. There can be no doubt that He meant that too. How often we have shied away from this commandment, trying to convince ourselves that Jesus couldn't possibly have spoken such difficult words!

3. "*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth*" (Matthew 6. 19). And we have certainly shied away from this commandment too. But how fundamental are these words to any permanent building of the kingdom of God on earth or anywhere else! "To live is to give, not to take!"

4. "*Ye shall be witnesses unto me . . . unto the uttermost part of the earth*" (Acts 1. 8). More

than a generation ago James M. Thoburn said: "The great glaring denial of faith and duty which stands out before the world today, so clearly that it cannot be concealed, is the refusal of those who bear the name of Christ to execute the great commission which their Master has given to them. Christianity is thus made to testify against herself. A thousand Ingersolls in every country under the sun would not do so much to create disbelief among men as this spectacle of a Church inheriting promises which she seems unable to believe, and receiving commandments which she seems unwilling to execute."

5. "*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect*" (Matthew 5. 48). We must expect this command after thinking over the difficulties of obeying the others. "On to perfection" was the slogan of the Wesleyan Movement. How near to reaching perfection any of them got may be a question. But it is eternally true that

"... a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what's heaven for?"

6. "*Tarry ye.*" Jesus knew that no man could of himself and by himself, keep these seemingly impossible commandments. So He climaxed all with the charge, "Tarry ye . . . until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24. 49). Oh, that more of us might feel the conviction that a friend of mine found, expressed on the flyleaf of Dan Crawford's Bible. The great missionary had written:

"I cannot do it alone,
The waves run fast and high,
The fogs close chill around,
The sun goes out in the sky,
But I know that we two
Shall win in the end,
Jesus and I."

And there are other commandments than these we have listed. All from the lips of our Lord Jesus. And all are alike in that they are all difficult. Yet Jesus *did* say, "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

I shall never forget a statement made by Rabbi Stephen H. Wise some years ago in speaking before the City Club of Rochester, New York. Just returning from an exploratory trip in Europe, he graphically described the terrible breakdown that had followed the Great War. Every now and then he would punctuate his description by this striking sentence, "And if you Christians had been true to the teachings of the great Nazarene, this never would have happened!" What an indictment!

To the same point I have in my possession a very frank letter that a friend of mine, a Jewish rabbi, wrote me a few years ago in answer to my request for a statement from him on the question, "What does the world need most just now?" The following was his answer:

"What the world needs most, wrecked as it is by a postwar heritage of hate, is a recollection of the teachings of the prophet of Nazareth. He taught that hate and enmity, violence and the sword are irreconcilable with the religion which he taught. He insisted that his followers 'love

them that hate them,' 'turn the other cheek,' and 'love other nations as themselves.' He predicted that those who took the sword would perish by the sword. But today we see peoples hating others like themselves, they are rivals and refusing to forgive their enemies, putting their trust in might, not right. The nations which do these things denominate themselves Christians. What the nations need is to be reminded that peace on earth can only be obtained by good will to men. What the Christian world needs is a translation of its Christianity from books to life."

We must take kindly such criticisms as these. Is it not high time for all Christians to enlist in the adventure of trying out the commandments of Jesus in everyday life in our present world? Certainly we must do this if we are to experience the Reality of the Presence.



Prayer

O God, we are not worthy of the least of Thy mercies. We hardly dare to come to Thee because our sins are heavy upon us. And yet we cannot stay away, for deep within us there seems to be a hunger for Thyself. It must be Thou hast put this hunger there. It must be that this is why we dare to come, and why we dare to believe that Thou dost love us.

And because we dare believe that Thou dost love us we dare to think Thou wilt give us help. Help to overcome our sins, to be more like our

Saviour Jesus Christ. We pray again: Have mercy upon us, O God, according to Thy loving-kindness. According to the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out our transgressions. And this we ask for Jesus' sake. Amen.



Life's Fulfillment

Of all the prizes
That earth can give
This is the best:
To find Thee, Lord,
A living Presence near,
And in Thee rest!

Friends, fortune, fame,
Of what might come to me—
I count all loss
If I find not
Companionship
With Thee!



Retrospect

Over the hills and far away
I see you, Little Lad, at play,
With curly head and cheeks of tan,
A-dreaming, dreaming, of the man,
The "great big man" that you would be!

.

I wonder, dare I let you see
Just what the years have done to me,
Thou Little Lad that used to be?

V

The Need of Technique

"WHAT would you do if God had forsaken you?" This is the question a stranger flung at me one morning years ago as she stood at the door of our Connecticut parsonage.

After she had asked, "Are you the minister?" she had proceeded with the main question. Of course I invited her in.

When she was seated I replied: "My friend, I do not believe that God ever forsakes anyone, certainly not as long as there is the slightest chance of reaching Him. 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee,' is what He said."

"Ah, but He has forsaken me," she broke in, "as I can show you." And then she went on to tell me a story of one sorrow after another covering a period of a dozen years.

It was indeed a pitiful tale and my heart ached for her. But when she was done, again she said—rather triumphantly I thought—"Now don't you see that God has forsaken me?"

Of course it was my turn. "No, my friend, you are mistaken. You have indeed been through some heartbreaking experiences, but if you will let me, I can prove to you that God is by your side, and yearning to become a comforting reality in your life."

"What do you mean?" she answered.

"Just this," I replied, "if you will faithfully follow the prescription I will give you, for a

half dozen weeks, I can promise you that you will discover that God has not forsaken you."

"What is your prescription?" she asked. Whereupon I proceeded to indicate that she must faithfully set apart a half hour every morning, and half that time each evening, for certain readings that I would furnish, and for quiet meditation and prayer.

But that was as far as I got. My poor visitor broke in with a very revealing sentence: "Oh, I couldn't promise to do that. You see, I haven't done any praying since God forsook me."

The truth was perfectly evident—God had not forsaken my strange caller but she had forsaken Him. If only she had built up—before the troubles came—a technique of holy habits, of reading and meditation and communion with the Invisible, how different her story would have been!

"O sometimes the shadows are deep,
And rough seems the path to the goal,
And sorrows, sometimes how they sweep
Like tempests down over the soul!
O, then to the Rock let me fly."

But the chances are that we will not fly to the Rock, or even find our way to the Rock, with very much success unless we have previously worn a path to the trysting place before the shadows and the darkness began to fall.

Daniel is a good example of what I mean. He had learned a technique of worship and spiritual strengthening before the tempest came. That technique became invaluable to him when the world about began to crumble. When he "knew that

the writing was signed," by which his enemies were plotting his downfall, Daniel "went into his house . . . kneeled upon his knees three times a day and prayed . . . as he did aforetime."

"As he did aforetime"! That is the revealing phrase. That means that Daniel's technique of living and worshiping met the test, and carried him triumphantly through the storms that raged in a stormy world. Blessed is the man who has learned what Daniel learned!

This is the value of holy habits. Even the Ten Commandments, in the last analysis, are high and holy habits designed by the Heavenly Father to lead men into fellowship with Him and His Kingdom program. So too are the commandments of Christ. If we keep the commandments, we keep ourselves in the highway that leads to Life and to Him.

The fact that the commands in the Bible, like the ritual of our churches, are misused and are so often regarded as the end, rather than the means to the end, does not invalidate the monumental truth that the great prophets and leaders and saints of the Church came into their experience of the Presence, not so much through estatic visions as by walking humbly and steadily in the way of the Lord.

Indeed, the so-called "prophets' ecstasy" may be a very unfortunate phrase. Isaiah was speaking out of his own rich experience when he said, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." And he seems to mean that those "who mount up with wings as eagles," and even those who "shall run, and not be weary," will be those

who have first learned to "walk and not faint" (Isaiah 40. 31).

No man can, with impunity, "break one of these least commandments" (Matthew 5. 19). When one grows careless in his technique of approach to God, he will invariably grow less sensible to the Presence of God. *It seems to be the indisputable fact that this matter of technique is of first importance to those who are seeking to make God real.*

I like to sing that hymn wherein we pray, "Take the dimness of my soul away." But God cannot do it alone. We need to remember that the place where we begin to lose spiritual sight is the very place where we begin to be careless toward the Sabbath or other points of holy technique. Perhaps there is more truth than we have thought in the counsel that a famous college president was wont to give to his students. It was to the effect that if you stop kneeling in prayer you may soon stop praying.

Recently I came upon a noble paragraph which seems to me to stand out among the many rich contributions which Dr. James Moffatt has made to our Christian literature. He says, "You and I are not like a group of men upon a lonely moor, kneeling down to prevent a little spot of fire being blown out by the great winds of the world. The Christian Church is not nervously engaged in trying to prevent the extinction of Christianity; it is in far wiser hands than ours, as it always has been. What you and I have to do is to keep in touch with the fire. The fire will always burn."

The gates of hell shall not prevail against

Christ and His Church. "The fire will always burn"! But our part is "to keep in touch." Not once in a while, but every day and every hour. This means holy habits.



Prayer

O Christ, Thou who wast tempted in all points like unto us, grant us Thy help this day. Thou knowest the burdens of the flesh. Thou knowest that sometimes the shadows are deep, that sometimes the very stars go out and God seems so far away. In these moments and hours of darkness remind us, dear Christ, of the certainty of Thy presence. "When darkness veils His lovely face, I rest on His unchanging grace." O may we do this! And whatever may be the causing of our gloom—the weariness of our flesh, the sudden descent of sorrow, the disappointment of cherished hopes, or the bruises borne on the hands of our friends, grant us in these hours of temptation the power to go on walking in the paths of righteousness and peace, until the clouds break and the light comes, and the glory of the Lord shines through. Amen.



Christmas Time

Dear Christ, how lonely you must be at Christmas time
 Watching the shoppers on the crowded street;
 So few there are who can one moment find,
 In which to lay some treasure at Thy feet!

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And yet I think that like some selfless mother,
Finding her pleasure in her children's glee,
Thou dost smile down upon our childish doings,
Still yearning that our hearts might turn to Thee.

O patient Christ, Thy love shall yet enthrone us
Up from the lower things of sense and time,
Dear patient Christ, Thy leading yet shall woo us
Unto Thyself and to the life sublime!

VI

The Set of the Will

OUR theological fathers fought over such questions as the freedom of the will. We today are not tempted so much to theological wrangling. But our danger is in the other direction. Perhaps we give too little consideration to doctrinal teachings. For instance, the important part that the set of the will plays in the making of a life.

"Some ships sail East and some sail West
By the selfsame winds that blow;
'Tis the set of the sail and not the gale
That determines the way we go."

The Scriptures and all experiences are full of illustrations of this truth, that the difference between the great and the insignificant, the weak and the powerful, the defeated and the victorious, is the set of the will—a purpose once fixed and then death or victory.

To me it has always served as an inspiration to repeat the Old-Testament words: "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself." And also that splendid reply made by the three young Hebrews to the pagan king, "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thy hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" (Daniel 3. 17-18). That is the kind of determina-

tion that wins victories, and, what is more, gains companionship with the Eternal.

When we study carefully this problem "of making God real," we discover that the set of the will is almost always the determining factor. Jesus was selecting His words carefully when He declared, "If any man chooses to do the will of God he shall know" (John 7. 17). He shall know whatever anyone can know about spiritual forces and spiritual discoveries. That means that it is not really by searching but by following that we find God. Life is proof of this.

Now, there are two mistakes that we can make in regard to the will. One is the supposition that the will, if properly set, is sufficient in itself to enable us to meet life's battles. Here is a dangerous error, for this is leaving God out, and it means failure in the end. It is like lifting oneself by one's bootstraps. The other mistake is in supposing that willing is merely a first cousin of wishing. There is a mighty difference between the two. As to the will being sufficient unto itself, all of us who have had a measure of success in walking with God have learned that while the will can be educated and exercised, and so greatly strengthened, yet in the end it must find its source of strength in the Divine Power. We may bravely say:

"Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul."

But it remains the fact that untold numbers who have spoken in such valiant tones have added

themselves to the list of suicides or to the moral wreckage of each generation.

It is likewise true that there are very few Christians who cannot recall shameful hours of defeat because, in the moments of severe testing, we have rested too much upon our own will power and not enough in the strength of the Presence. We must constantly remember that when stalwart Christians like Paul say, "I can do all things," they are quick to add, "through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4. 13).

But after we have learned that the strongest will is not sufficient without Christ, we must also learn that Christ can do little for us until we have registered with Him our heaven-high determination to know His commandments and to walk His ways. Much, then, depends upon the set of the will. And this means that we must realize the vast difference there is between the set of the will and mere wishing. Who does not enjoy that fine Negro spiritual, "I Want to Be a Christian"? But for how many of us do the words express anything more than a shallow wish?

We have said that the final factor in John Wesley's success in his quest for Reality was faith, but it is just as true that it was the set of the will that started him on the road that led to his Aldersgate experience and to peace.

In Wesley's *Journal*, the entry for May 24, 1738, concerning his going "to a society in Aldersgate Street," reads, "I went very unwillingly." *But he went!* That is characteristic of him. He had started out on the quest for God's certainty. And he kept going! He kept going when he felt

like it and when he did not. His *Journal* is full of examples of "the set will." For instance, that passage where he was preaching to a great crowd of miners among whom were some who had warned him against preaching in that place. In the midst of his message, one of the more daring, coming up from behind, pushed him off the improvised pulpit. Wesley says, "I went up again." It was like him. He never stayed down!

In a *Journal* entry of May 7, 1739, he writes: "I was preparing to set out for Pensford, having now had leave to preach in the church, when I received the following note:

"'Sir,—Our minister, having been informed that you are beside yourself, does not care you should preach in any of his churches.'"

Wesley's comment was, "*I went, however.*" And he adds: "On Priestdown, about half a mile from Pensford, I preached Christ our 'wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.'"

Such resolution is reminiscent of the set will of Jesus, as, for instance, in that chapter where Luke says, "He steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9. 51). We too must form the habit of the "set face" if we expect to keep alongside of our Lord and experience the joy of the Presence.

Is not this too the secret of Paul's greatness as a spiritual adviser? Is not the power of his writings due very much to the fact that he speaks out of his own experience? And the foundation of that experience is always his "set face." He had started on the great quest. "One thing I do," he says, "forgetting the things which are

behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal" (Philippians 3. 13, 14).

And what was that goal? He answers, "The excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, . . . that I may know him" (Philippians 3. 8-10).

There is one sentence in Dan Crawford's *Thinking Black* which has remained with me ever since I read it more than a decade ago. He was describing the gloom and depression of spirit that settled down over him one day after he entered the jungle on his way to the mission station. The jungle seemed to shut out everything that was dear to him and that for the moment seemed to make life worth living. Who has not run into a jungle like that! And right there he lost his song. Days came and went; but he could not sing!

Then came the morning when he turned to the 108th Psalm. The first line seemed to have been written for him, "O God, my heart is fixed; I *will* sing." He read it over again. He shouted it, "I *will* sing!" And sing he did. And God heard.



Prayer

Dear God, how often life seems to be a jungle! The foliage of gloom shuts out the light of heaven. Shadows of our own fears lurk on every side. We dread the things that are before; and when we look back, we see only the perils through which

we have passed. No welcome light breaks into our darkness. No strains of song come to stir the silent places. Foes are on every hand. O God, in such hours give us the faith to march forward. Help us to keep the set face toward the goal. O help us to patiently press on, remembering that God's goodness is unchanging, that His mercy is everlasting, that the darkness will give way, that the morning will dawn, and that the glory of God will shine forth again in the face of Jesus Christ. O Thou who didst steadfastly set Thy face to do the Father's will, grant us the grace to follow on. And in Thy name we pray. Amen.



I Will Not Quit

I will not quit
 However hard the fight;
 I will not quit
 The conflict and the right.

I will not quit
 However sore the strife;
 This is the way He trod
 To glory and to life.

I will not quit
 However dark the day;
 I will have faith
 That darkness will give way.

I will not quit
 However rough the sod;
 I know this is the way
 That leads to God.

I will not quit
 Until the Kingdom's won;
 Until I hear Him say,
 "Well done!"

Opportunity

When all men cry, "Impossible,"
And thou art left alone,
Thine ancient friend a pessimist,
Thy pillow but a stone;
Then is thine opportunity,
Thy call from God on high;
Grip well thy sword,
Call on thy Lord,
Go forth to do or die!

VII

Faith and Reality

BEFORE we deal with today's theme, let us summarize "The Seven Steps" that lead to Reality—to the discovery of God as a living, loving, guiding Presence.

First: There must be the conviction that finding God real "doesn't just happen." We must *set out* upon "The Quest for God."

Second: There must be the realization that our inherited "second-hand religion" must be transformed into a first-hand experience of the Presence.

Third: There must be the determination to give no quarter to the sins within—for sin always separates from God.

Fourth: There must be the determination to give no quarter to the sins *without*—in society and the world about—for sins against our brother man are sins against our Father-God.

Fifth: We must seek to find a technique that will help us to build habits of worship, and to sustain a spirit of obedience to the commands of Christ.

Sixth: We must train the will to intelligently and persistently practice our technique: "If any man will do his will, he shall know."

Seventh: Faith is the *final* step to certainty. It was so with Abraham and Job, with Paul and Augustine, with Martin Luther and John Wesley. It will be so with us. Faith, therefore, is the

final theme of this chapter. We can only deal with it briefly here.

Perhaps John Wesley's quest for Reality is the most interesting and instructive to be studied, even more so than the quest of Martin Luther. This is true, I think, partly because Wesley's *Journal* is more complete in detail than any we know, and partly because John Wesley's quest shows how one may earnestly follow the six steps we have described and yet fail to find assurance or "the warmed heart" *until faith finally ushers in the victory.*

For instance, Wesley was without doubt deeply dissatisfied with his second-hand religion. He sincerely set out to find peace with God. His sins were heavy upon him; he was almost morbid in his introspection. Dr. W. A. Fitchett says, in *Wesley and His Century*: "Wesley had, as few men ever had, the sense of sin and its hatefulness: a vision of the divine law—holy, stainless, august—dishonored by sin. And the sense of the profound and eternal discord betwixt his sinful consciousness and the stainless righteousness of God forebade all peace." Moreover, he was way ahead of his time in discerning the social sins to which others were blind. That he was truly anxious to follow the commands of Christ there can be no doubt.

He welcomed the opportunity to go as a missionary to America in the hope that this adventure would "save his soul." Nor is there any question that he found and followed a technique of religious education and worship. He was most methodical in his habits. But peace did not come.

God was not real to him. He was not sure of Christ.

It is well known that he wrote in his *Journal* upon his return from America: "It is now two years and almost four months since I left my native country, in order to teach the Georgian Indians the nature of Christianity; but what have I learned myself in the meantime? Why, what I least of all expected, that I, who went to America to convert others, was never myself converted to God."

It is significant that in later years in re-reading this entry in his *Journal*, John Wesley wrote, "I am not sure of this." Of course he wasn't sure that he was an unconverted man. Unconverted men don't set out as missionaries of Christ to far-away lands.

But what we can be sure of is that Wesley did not have the inner peace which comes from an "assurance" of sins forgiven and a comradeship with the invisible Presence. The living Christ was not real to him.

Perhaps the most helpful thing about Wesley at this time was that he knew what he did *not* have. "The faith I want," he says, "is a sure trust and confidence in God that through the merits of Christ my sins are forgiven." Again, "I want that faith which none can have without knowing that he hath it, . . . having peace with God through Christ."

There is a peace that passeth understanding;
 There is a joy the world can never know;
 There is a light, you will not find it burning
 On any land or sea where'er you go.

This joy of mine is not of earthly making,
Though you may find it in the sunset's blush;
Above the noise and din of human striving
There is a Presence and a holy hush!

Wesley believed this with his intellect, but he had not discovered its reality by faith.

It was on Sunday, February 29, 1738, that John Wesley stepped on England's soil. It was on the night of May 24, 1738—three months later—that the peace finally came. Those weeks between were full of spiritual struggle. It seems strange that this remarkable Englishman should have gone through so much of intellectual confusion and spiritual heartache before God became to him a reality in Christ. Yet it is true that the more difficult the Quest the more precious is the Grail!

It is well to recall the words of Lecky, the historian: "This day in the life of John Wesley meant more to England than all her victories under Pitt." Lecky was referring to May 24, 1738, on the evening of which day John Wesley's heart was "strangely warmed." Of that historic Aldersgate meeting Wesley has written, "In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the *Epistle to the Romans*. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given to me that He had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death. . . . I then testified

openly to all there what I now first felt in my heart."

Now, there is something very strange about all this. A change had surely come over John Wesley. But what was it? He says, "An assurance was given to me." Then he stood up and testified openly to the new consciousness of God which had come to him and which, he said, "I now first felt in my heart."

It is easy to see how the skeptical Southey, in his biographical sketch, could attribute John Wesley's heart-warming to some physical reaction in his stomach! That is a bit humorous, but it is also additional evidence that "spiritual things are spiritually discerned."

Some of the words that gripped Wesley's mind and heart that memorable night were these: "Faith is a work of God in us which transforms us and makes us to be born again of God, and puts to death the old man in us and makes of us entirely new men in heart, courage, thought, and all our powers."

Luther had learned this from Saint Paul after years of bitter searching, and now Wesley was learning from Luther what had long been the secret of Protestantism; that justification is by faith, and the twin truth that the unseen Presence, the Spirit, "beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8. 16).

The best evidence we have that Wesley's new "discovery," so promptly witnessed to, aroused real excitement in the little meeting, is seen in the haste with which they hurried home to tell the news to his sick brother.

Charles Wesley was not present in the Aldersgate meeting. Lying at home he was praying, when, about ten o'clock, he heard the tramping of eager feet. The door was thrown open. In came Brother John, radiant with his new consciousness of God, and surrounded by happy friends.

In his *Journal* of that date Charles makes this record, "Toward ten o'clock my brother was brought in triumph by a troupe of our friends, and declared, 'I believe!'" The diary adds, "We sang a hymn with great joy and parted with prayer."

We should linger on that strange but triumphant cry, "I believe!" Some months before John Wesley had written, "Who . . . will deliver me from this evil heart of unbelief?" (*Journal*, Tuesday, January 24, 1738.) On the Sunday next following his Aldersgate experience he took as the text of his morning sermon, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5. 4). So it is!

"My faith looks up to Thee,
Thou Lamb of Calvary, Saviour divine."



Prayer

Dear God, O that I might please Thee this matchless morning, that I might requite Thee for Thy matchless mercies, that I might make the heart of the Almighty to rejoice!

But how can I do this? If I offer Thee my heart, it is all unworthiness, and high and holy

is Thy name. If I offer Thee my mind, it is but the immaturity of a child, perplexed before the mystery of Thy world. If I offer Thee my works, it is as nothing, for the weight of my transgressions is heavy against me.

O my God, I have nothing to give to Thee but the praises of my being: All the earth is splendid with Thy glory. Blessed be Thy holy name.

“In my hand no price I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling.”

Amen.



Autumn Time

O joy of all this world,
To stand beneath the Colorado sun,
And gaze upon the Rockies in the autumn time;
When aspens blaze their glory to the day,
And all the colors of the rainbow riot wide
On mountainsides that rise in rocky grandeur,
Tier on tier, to meet the snow-capped peaks
That gleam aloft amid September blue!

Then to reflect that deep behind it all
Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard,
Nor can imagination's fondest dream
Picture the things that wait the sons of God!

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Beauty Eternal! Creator of all glory,
Lord of all life that is, that is to be,
O grant me faith amid this earthly splendor,
To dream of things no mortal eye can see!

PART THREE
RELIGIOUS CERTAINTY

- I. "HEARSAY" RELIGION**
- II. MEN WHO KNOW**
- III. THE JOB-MAN**
- IV. FIRST-HAND RELIGION**
- V. NO SUBSTITUTE**
- VI. WHEN THE WORLD WONDERS**
- VII. CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE**



I

"Hearsay" Religion

It is important now that we return to this question of first-hand religion as contrasted with the "hearsay" types. For, while vital religion is never blind to the experiences which the Fathers have had with God, the vital Christian is never satisfied until he has found an experience of his own.

Even the Old Testament gives us examples which serve as prophecies of New-Testament experience. For instance, it thrills me to read Job's words spoken in the moment of his great new discovery. As the realization of the nearness of the Presence breaks in upon him we have noted that Job can't help contrasting the new and the old in these words, "I had heard of thee by hearsay, but now mine eyes have seen thee" (Job 42. 5, Moffatt). Yes, this new experience of God seemed as near and real as that. How else could he say it? His spirit eyes were opening.

But why may we not try a free translation of our own? What Job really meant, enthralled with his new experience, was this: "In the past I have heard of Thee by hearsay, but now I have discovered Thee for myself."

We will never know all the details of those moments in which Job made his discovery any more than we can know the details of those moments when Martin Luther received his illumination on

the sacred stairway, or when John Wesley came into the experience of "certainty" in that Aldersgate-Street meeting.

But why puzzle over the details of just how the consciousness of God's presence came to Job or Wesley or anyone else? It is the fact that matters—the fact as evidenced by the results of the new conviction of the new life. If Job's discovery had happened at evening time, he might have written,

I had a visit from the living God;
At evening time the sky was all aglow,
The burnished hills threw back their amber light,
Yet it was not the light that moved me so!

Yes, the thing that really mattered to Job (or to whomsoever it was that wrote this drama of life) was that now there had come to him a first-hand experience of God. He had graduated from the congregation of "hearsay" religionists.

However, there are some things about Job's story that we can know and ought to know. To me one of the most soulful cries of the Old Testament is Job's blind prayer, "Oh that I knew where I might find him!" (Job 23. 3.)

Reflect how strange a prayer this is for one who is evidently a "churchman." Indeed, it is easy to guess that he was a member of the "official board." And, too, a man who was so careful about the saying of prayers in his own home must have been careful about not playing any kind of golf on the Sabbath—at least before he attended formal worship. So Job would rank fairly high as a "regular supporter of the church."

But all of this didn't comfort him when the depression hit him, and still less when his boys and girls were taken from him in one great hurricane of affliction. Then his health broke. And then came his anguished pleading, "Oh that I knew where I might find him."

Notice how the accent is on that last word, "him." It was a God who would come near and be personal that Job was now seeking. May we not say that for the first time in his life this churchman began a determined quest for God as a real living Presence? Blessed is any man who comes to such an hour, when he realizes that formal religion, or "hearsay" religion—or whatever you may call it—is not enough to satisfy the hunger of the soul.

There are four main answers that men give to Job's question, "Canst thou by searching find out God?" (Job 11. 7.) For this is the phraseology into which the afflicted man's prayer finally resolves itself. This is the question of all generations. Is God knowable? Is He knowable to us ordinary mortals?

First comes the so-called atheist with his answer: "No; you can't find God because He doesn't exist except in your mind or your imagination." Of course there isn't any sense in arguing with the atheist. That isn't the way to reach him. He has troubles enough already trying to explain the universe. Why irritate him further? Better try him with a little verse like this:

"There is no God?
Stand quiet there a space,
Let His love shine upon your face,

The whispering air stir soft your hair;
 Let down the barriers of your will,
 Let light and faith dark spaces fill.
 Why, all is God!"

Next comes the so-called agnostic. He is more difficult to deal with. But I have had great patience with the agnostic ever since that evening when I heard a college chum of mine cry, "If there is a God, I hope he will forgive me, for I just can't believe!"

And I understand the struggle of the business man who sat in my office and said: "I'm not irreligious. I believe there must be a God. It is easier to think of a great Intelligence behind this vast universe than to suppose it is the result of the play of blind forces. But my trouble is that I just can't believe that a God who is great enough to make the stars above can care anything about a little speck on the horizon like me."

Then I thought how easy it is to confuse greatness with bigness. The psalmist was tempted to do this that night under the stars when he cried, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" And I remember how I felt looking down from the top of the Empire State Building in New York upon those "little specks" moving along Fifth Avenue. Then I heard myself saying, "Why, if I got up as high again as this, I couldn't even see them. O God, 'what is man, that thou art mindful of him?'" So I meditated until I recalled that it was one of those little man-specks who had dreamed that mighty building into existence and had built it there in the center of New York City, a monument to the greatness of the human mind. A man

may not be very big in bulk, but he was created greater than the stars! I believe in the faith that wrote,

“How many million stars must shine
That only God can see,
Yet in His heaven His hand has hung
Ten million stars for me.”



Prayer

Blessed be Thy name, dear God, for Thy creation. Thou hast made the mountains, the vast plains, and the waters of the mighty ocean. Thou hast made the moon and the stars and the universe of stars, and behind Thy creation Thou hast put productive and mysterious forces. And over all Thou hast created man in Thine own image, that he might be the caretaker and the steward of the works of Thy heart—*that he might know companionship with God.*

Forgive our blindness to this great stewardship from heaven. Forgive our selfishness that we so often take to our own use alone the things that Thou hast made for us to share. Forgive our disobedience to Thy divine commands. Forgive our slowness to receive the Christ, Thy greatest revelation of Thyself, the supreme expression of Thy love. Forgive the persisting dullness of our faith that He—the living Lord—should stand unrecognized and oftentimes unwanted at our side. O God, forgive our sin.

Stir us to face this stewardship anew. Help us to banish laziness and selfishness from our lives.

Help us to know the Kingdom call—the crying of little children, the fears of those who are growing old, the confusion of the youth who cannot find his way, the hunger and the heartache of the world.

O Thou for whom our hearts are made, whose comradeship we crave, have mercy upon us, give us another and another chance. And perhaps at last, by Thy good patient grace, we shall crucify ourselves and live abundantly in God. In the name of Christ we pray. Amen.



The Royal Gorge

Ten thousand times ten thousand years
 These walls were being made for me!
 To think that through the heat and cold,
 While centuries were growing old,
 He wrought in His vast majesty
 That I might now His glory see!

Among the Redwoods

I heard God speak today,
 I heard Him speak majestically;
 From out the Redwood's height,
 In grand high tone,
 He spoke!
 The world grew hushed,
 We stood alone!
 Then did I hear Him
 Speak the psalmist's lay:
 "Be still, for I am God"—
 This did He say!

II

Men Who Know

"CANST thou by searching find out God?" We have been reviewing the answers to this ever-recurring question. The atheist and the agnostic have spoken.

There are two other persons now to be heard. One is the Paul-man. The other is the Job-man. The Paul-man is most often scorned by the atheist, for he is the man who says, "I know whom I have believed." And when the agnostic hears, he is puzzled. Or sometimes he just lifts his brows in superior disdain. The idea of anyone being "sure of God" is beyond the agnostic!

But, if the latter is honest, he has to admit that the men who have been able to say, "I know Him," are the men who have changed the climate and even the geography for Christianity in every century.

Somebody said to Gypsy Smith, after he had testified to the reality of the Presence, "Oh, you are dreaming." Then the poet-preacher sat down and wrote a song. It began with these words, "Let me dream on then, if I am dreaming!"

We can understand, for these so-called dreamers have not only brought joy and peace and power into their own lives, but they have been the ones who have so often in their own generation remade the world.

Yes, "let me dream on!" Thomas Curtis Clark,

in fine verse, insists that the dreams of these dreamers are born from above.

"Dreams are they—but they are God's dreams:
 Shall we decry them and scorn them?
 That men shall love one another,
 That white shall call black man brother,
 That greed shall pass from the market place,
 That lust shall yield to love for the race,
 That men shall meet God face to face—
 Dreams are they all,
 But shall we despise them—
 God's dreams?"

There is something magnificent about these prophet-dreamers who are so sure of God and sure of His program for the Kingdom. Recently a notable Britisher said, as he joined with others in welcoming home the preacher of City Temple, London: "The world today is a jungle; the nations are prowling through it, snarling and baring their teeth at each other. At any moment a mistaken gesture may make them spring at each others throats. When mankind is about to stray, as it does in certain periods of history, into this morass of self-indulgence, materialism, or false emotionalism, it is the great preachers alone that can make an appeal that will bring them back. . . . Nothing will lift it out except great preaching that will go straight to the minds and hearts."

But the secret of great preaching is a great certainty! After all, real preaching is witnessing; and none can witness until he has something to witness about. It was a great commission that Jesus gave His disciples when He said just before His ascension, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me" (Acts 1. 8). They were to be more than preach-

ers; they were to be preachers plus. Plus what? Plus an experience with Christ.

But they were to know not merely an experience with Christ in the flesh whom they called Jesus; they were also to know an experience with the unseen Presence, the invisible Christ who, "in a little while," at Pentecost, would establish Himself in their lives with undoubted certainty as "the Spirit of the Lord."

This is why Jesus said they would have power to be witnesses "*after* the holy Spirit is come upon you."

It is not easy to say just where agnosticism ends and faith begins, but it is evident that the great weakness in agnosticism is its lack of conviction. We must have some mighty conviction if we are to move things either in the heavens above or in the earth beneath.

Who does not feel the strength of Paul's triumphant cry, "I am proud of the gospel" (Romans 1. 17, Moffatt). And he tells why! He had discovered God in Christ, and with this assurance came the irresistible power that swept all doubt from his mind and all obstacles from his progress.

Yes, those early leaders saw the necessity of every Christian having this first-hand experience of Christ. They called this "the witness of the Spirit"—the assurance that their Lord was risen from the dead and was near and real. Saint Paul writes to the Romans, "The Spirit Himself bears witness, along with our own spirits, to the fact that we are children of God" (Romans 8. 16, Weymouth). And just so Saint Peter writes,

“Sanctify the Lord God in your heart: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3. 15). This was witnessing indeed—to be able to tell the world the reason for being a disciple of Christ. Joining together the thought of Saint Paul and of Saint Peter they would say, “Be able to tell why you are proud of the gospel of Jesus Christ, what it means to you, what it has done for you.”

Herein lies the secret of a Wesley and a Whitefield—they found the certainty of Christ’s presence. They could say, “I know whom I have believed.” Yes, there is no doubt about it; there have been too many of these Paul-men to admit of any doubt. They have been the great spiritual leaders of every community and every age. And these witnesses have been of differing types and temperaments—a Phillips Brooks and a Dwight L. Moody, a Drummond and a General Booth, a Rauschenbusch and a Frances E. Willard. But all men of different temperaments witness to the same experience of certainty. For instance, Phillips Brooks might be witnessing for them all in these words of his: “What is it that strikes and delights in him? [The Spirit-filled Christian.] It is the intense and intimate reality of Christ. Christ is evidently to him the clearest Person in the universe. He delights to please Christ. His whole life is light and elastic with this buoyant desire of doing everything for Jesus, just as Jesus would wish it done. So simple, but so powerful! So childlike, but so heroic! Duty has been transfigured. The weariness, the drud-

gery, the whole task-nature has been taken away. Love has poured like a new lifeblood along the dry veins, and the soul that used to toil and groan and struggle goes ever singing along its way."



Prayer

O God, source of the life that never dies, and of the light that increases to eternal day, we lift our flickering torches up to Thee and pray that Thou wilt set us afire anew. We need Thy life to quicken ours. Every day we need Thee—every hour.

Some of us remember the first moments when we became conscious of Thy high and holy presence. The whole world was flooded with new light and the universe took on a new meaning. Then something happened and the world grew dull again. Since then we have often sung, "O the joy and the peace that the Lord gave me then." But down deep in our hearts we know that we ought not to live in the past; that we need not live in the past, that every day is a new beginning, that every morning the world may be made anew.

O forgive us, dear Christ, that we have been content to lie down defeated. We have sinned. We have done the things we ought not to have done and we have left undone the things we should have done. And, worst of all, we have conformed to the world when we might have helped to transform the world.

Dear Christ, we stand amazed at Thy forgiving love. We lift shamed faces up to Thine and in Thy presence new hope is born. At least may one great truth be fixed deep in our minds: that to fully love Thee we must love Thy commandments, and that our only hope of abiding in Thy presence is to abide in Thy word. Help us, dear Christ. We ask only in Thy name. Amen.



The Parson's Prayer

I do not ask
That crowds may throng the temple,
That standing room be priced;
I only ask that as I voice the message,
They may see Christ!

I do not ask
For churchly pomp or pageant,
Or music such as wealth alone can buy;
I only ask that as I voice the message,
He may be nigh!

I do not ask
That men may sound my praises
Or headlines spread my name abroad;
I only pray that as I voice the message,
Hearts may find God!

I do not ask
For earthly place or laurel,
Or of this world's distinctions any part;
I only ask when I have voiced the message,
My Saviour's heart!

III

The Job-Man

BUT, after all is said, we must be fair to the Job-man. While we cannot classify him with the Paul-man who triumphantly says, "I know him," nevertheless it is no small thing that this Job-man's philosophy is neither atheistic nor essentially agnostic.

Moreover, if all the members of the modern churches were as good as Job is painted to be, I wonder if there wouldn't be a marked improvement all around. Certainly, there would be increased church attendance, and a better observance of the Sabbath. Yes, and more family altars!

But, of course, this is not the heart of the matter. In the first place, it is not a question of how good we are but how good we ought to be. Our "hearsay" religion may make us as good in our time as our fathers were in theirs, but we of the new day must be better than our fathers. Said Jesus, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, . . . but I say unto you. . . ." Evidently, we must keep growing if we are to keep up with Jesus. And we can't do this on the power of a "hearsay" religion.

If we are content with the lower levels, we not only rob ourselves of the visions from the heights, but we rob our neighbors of the better example which God intends we shall give them. It is

terribly true that the good may be the enemy of the best.

“Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
As the swift seasons roll!
Leave thy low vaulted past!”

However, the fatal weakness of “hearsay” religion lies in the fact, not that it fails to preach goodness, but that it fails to proclaim a vital and intimate relationship with God. Real religion has to do not primarily with goodness but with the good relationship with God that leads to increasing goodness. “I have somewhat against thee,” says the Christ of Saint John’s Revelation, “because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou hast fallen, and repent, and do the first works” (Revelation 2. 4, 5). It seems that the “first works” for a Christian is maintaining the glow of his first love for Christ, which means to me and to many others, keeping alive the consciousness of the Presence. And this is a different thing than merely holding to the precepts of inherited religion. In fair weather we might get along with this environmental religion, but when the storms arrive, that which happened to Job happens to us, and we cry, “Oh that I knew where I might find him!” The religion needed must have “Him”—a God who is both personal and near.

Not that I am suggesting any separation between faith and works. There has been too much of that both in the past and in the present. The controversy in the early Church on this matter did little good, just as our modern controversies

between the "social gospelers" and the exponents of "individual evangelism" do little good. Jesus gave us only one gospel, and it was too big to be monopolized by any right-wingers or left-wingers. It is a gospel for the whole man—body, mind, and spirit; and as such is concerned with both "the here and the now" and with "the life beyond." It would have to be if it were deeply concerned with either.

The fact is we have exaggerated that so-called controversy in the early Church over faith and works. It is doubtful if we have any right to make Saint James the outstanding champion of good works and credit Saint Paul with being the one apostle of the gospel of salvation by faith. A careful reading will make evident that Saint James was just as strong for "saving faith" as anyone, and that Saint Paul constantly is warning that "faith without works is dead" (James 2. 26), even if these particular words belong to his brother apostle.

It is well also to remember another truth, which is, that while one must (unless he is to remain lopsided) see the *whole* gospel of Jesus in relation to all of life, yet who can emphasize all phases and all sides of so great a gospel at the same moment?

In the nation-wide series of regional conferences on evangelism led by the bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, thousands of pastors and laymen faced together the need, and discussed the methods, of leading young and old, inside and outside of the Church, into honest decision for Christ and His way of life.

There was an unexpected and almost unanimous agreement that such conferences on evangelism were overdue. But sadly enough there has occasionally been evidence of dissatisfaction in a few minds because more time has not been given to an emphasis of such themes as world peace, the liquor problem, the economic order, internationalism, and other phases of the gospel of "good works," about which all Christians ought to be concerned.

Now, it is true that we are not half as much concerned with these matters of moral and social action as we should be. Nevertheless, such criticisms are unfair and out of order because of the fact that the gospel of our Lord is too big and too many-sided to stress all of it at any one time. We ought to be able to show a passion for "the main business" without being represented as uninterested in the other implications of the gospel.

For instance, in that last great hour in the Upper Room when Jesus led His eleven disciples in prayer, did He forget all the vast social and economic and international implications of His message? Did He forget the wide world of men in the grip of poverty, injustice, and wretchedness?

You might think so if you interpreted literally His prayer, "I pray not for the world, but for them [the eleven] which thou hast given me" (John 17. 9). But we are not fair and not discerning unless we see beyond His words—unless we recognize that in the background of Jesus' mind and in the very center of His heart was this lost world He came to redeem and to change.

He surely did agonize over the world of people.

Nevertheless, the burden of His prayer on that last night was for that little group of disciples who so soon were to "be left alone."

Moreover, His prayer for them was very specific—that they might know God. Surely, there were many other things they must know too, but the one essential thing for his disciples to know was the certainty of the consciousness of the presence of God, the Father.

Hear Jesus as He prays, "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son." Why glorify the Son? Is this a selfish prayer? By no means; Jesus is not thinking of Himself. Hear Him: "That thy Son also may glorify thee." But how and for what? "That he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." Oh, it is the world of men, after all, that He is praying for, that they may have the life eternal born within themselves!

And *what* is life eternal? This, to know a comradeship with God, to know Him as a Father, as a living Presence. Is not this the yearning of the ages? Was not this what Job was seeking in his cry, "Oh that I knew where I might find him!"? So Jesus says, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee." So it is!



Prayer

O God, invisible and eternal, our yearning hearts reach out to Thee; but our feeble faith often fails to find Thee. Our sight for unseen

things is so untrained. We are but kindergarten children of the spirit world. We have not practiced the Presence as we should. The heavens declare Thy glory, and yet we so often fail to see. The universe is full of the echo of Thy voice, but we do not listen. But once in a while, in the quiet of a dawning day, or of the evening time, we do have the consciousness of Thy presence and the still small Voice breaks through. Blessed be Thy name, dear God; as Thy Spirit witnesses to ours there does come the peace and power of heaven.

But why are we not always strong? Oh, why are we so often without the consciousness of Thee? Dear God, we know! Thou hast told us in Thy word; Thou hast told us in our silent times. We do the things we ought not to do, and leave undone the things we ought not to leave undone. How weak we are, how great our need, how wonderful Thy patient love! One thing we know: we cannot get along without Thee. We thank Thee for the growing hunger of our hearts. In Christ's dear name we ask for victory this day. Amen.



Philosophers

"The best of the scientists know that we are little kindergarten fellows playing with mysteries."

Two mighty brains deep in philosophy!
 I saw them puzzling with the universe:
 "Is there a God?"
 One reasoned "Yes"; the other "No,"
 But neither seemed to find the way to go!

Two mighty brains, yes, so they were,
But "little kindergarten fellows" after all—
Just men!
"Playing with mystery" beneath the dome,
Playing until a Voice should call them home!

And while they puzzled, talked, and talked some more,
With great words filled the pages
Of the century,
A wiser man fell on his face and cried,
"O God, be merciful," and lo! arose full satisfied.

Oh, can a man by searching find out God?
And sadly through the years men come and go,
And learn at last
That not by searching do we find the Lord of all;
Only by following when we hear Him call!

IV

First-Hand Religion

LET us repeat those words which we pondered at the end of the preceding study. We cannot use them too often in our challenge to "hearsay" religion. Jesus said, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God."

And that phrase, "life eternal," is what Jesus meant when, at another time, He spoke of the "abundant life." Then we must note that the life abundant and the life eternal are the same, and that the secret of finding the way to them lies in a sure knowledge of God: "This is life eternal"—to know Him.

And, returning to Job, we will remind ourselves again that this sure knowledge of God was what the Old-Testament character was seeking when he cried in his distress, "Oh that I knew where I might find him!" Also this was the experience—when found—that led Job to say: "I had heard of thee by hearsay, but now mine eyes have seen thee."

I think too we should review our preceding study in order to recall also that while, in those last great moments in the Upper Room, it was the strategy of Jesus to pray "not for the world" but for that little group of men who were to be "the leaven" that should leaven the world, nevertheless He was praying for them just because of His vast concern for the great needy world.

Here is the evidence: "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world" (John 17. 18). "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (John 17. 15).

Why keep them from the evil in the world? Why keep them at the same time in contact with the world? Of course there is only one answer: That the world through them might be saved. Time and again Jesus had emphasized that His reason for coming into the world was because "God so loved the world" (John 3. 16).

And He had sometimes gone into detail about His program for the saving of the world, as when He had declared: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4. 18, 19). This is not a gospel for just a few individuals. It is a gospel for all men of every color and kind!

And yet, alone now with His loyal disciples in this final hour, in this last prayer with the eleven men who would have to carry on at the head of the Christian movement—in such a high moment—Jesus is revealing His major strategy. This prayer is very definite. It is a prayer "not for the world," and yet it is supremely for the world. He is praying for the little group of men who will have to carry the commission to change the world. He is praying for them, that they may

first of all have eternal life in themselves. O may we quietly ponder what He means! Is it not this? *The major problem in giving abundant life to a terribly needy world is to know God yourself—to growingly know Him—and then to bring other men to know Him as you know Him.*

It is very evident that this is a different thing from “hearsay” religion. It is first-hand religion. It is the experience that comes out of a first-hand discovery of the reality of God and the certainty of His nearness. Moreover, it is this first-hand experience that has been offered to all of us in Jesus Christ.

Now, at the very beginning of the early Church the apostles recognized the importance of this principle of first-hand testimony. Also they saw clearly, as we must, that there can be no effective witnessing except by those who have seen and heard and experienced.

So, even before Pentecost, when the company of disciples were met under Peter’s leadership to select a successor to Judas, the first requirement was that all the candidates must have had a first-hand knowledge of the Lord’s ministry from the beginning.

Here is the way Peter stated it: “It is necessary, therefore, that of the men who have been with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us—beginning from His baptism by John down to the day on which He was taken up again from us into Heaven—one should be appointed to become a witness with us” (Acts 1. 21, 22, Weymouth).

Let us repeat those words, “One . . . appointed

to become a witness with us." A witness must have first-hand knowledge—else he cannot speak with authority. It was necessary that the apostles speak with authority concerning the life and ministry of Jesus.

But there was something even more important than that. A first-hand knowledge of the facts and events would be of immense importance to the successors of the apostles and to the Church in after years. *But the witness that would be more important than any other witness would be the inner witness that would come at Pentecost.* It would be more important because it would bring confirmation to all the other testimony of the disciples. They might testify to what Jesus had said and done; they might declare their belief that He was the very Christ sent of God to earth; they might even witness to His resurrection from the dead; but more than this was required. An inner witness was necessary. The Spirit of God must come directly to the human witnesses in order that the human testimony should be confirmed by the witness of the Divine Spirit. People who would hear the witnesses would want to be sure that the speakers had been in first-hand communion with God.

In those post-Pentecost days, when the Jewish officials "took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4. 13), it was more than a chance discovery that Peter and John had formerly been in company with Jesus of Nazareth in the days before His crucifixion. The real cause of their wonderment—whether they understood it or not—was that in the boldness and radiance of

the testimony of the prisoners the judges were aware of the unseen Presence of the Living Christ speaking through them.

“Lord, speak to me that I may speak
In living echoes of Thy tone;
As Thou hast sought so let me seek
Thy erring children lost and lone.”



Prayer

Dear Christ, we cannot get along without Thee. We have tried. We have followed the vain leadings of our own mind. We have said: “How can Christ be God? How can a Man who came to earth in flesh be also the Eternal One? How could this Babe in Mary’s arms have been in the beginning with God? How could it be that all things are made by Him and without Him nothing was made that was made? How?”

Oh, we have repeated the words a thousand times and still there comes no peace. And then we said, “We will behold the beauty of His words, and we will imitate the loveliness of His life—His most wonderful life.” But our minds would not consent to call Him Lord of all. And still there came no peace. The days continued barren, dreary, dead!

Then one day we heard the Voice: “I am the vine, ye are the branches; without me ye can bear no fruit; come unto me and I will give thee power and peace.” And then we saw the bloodstained cross and felt our sin—our sin of unbelief! And then we glimpsed the scars in hand and side. We

heard the Voice again, "Behold my wounds; reach here thy fingers; doubt no more."

Dear Christ, we will not forget the day we threw our doubtings to the winds, and took Thy strengthening hand, and cried, "My Lord, My God." O Christ, we do not understand. Yea, even now we do not understand. But this we know that Thou art near, and in Thy presence we find God. Dear Lord, on this another day grant us Thy power and Thy peace. Amen.



A Presence

I had a visit from the living God!

At evening time the sky was all aglow,
The burnished hills threw back an amber light,
Yet it was not the light that moved me so!

It seemed there was a Presence by my side;

It seemed I heard a voice so sweet and low!
The burnished hills threw back their amber light,
Yet it was not the light that moved me so!

V

No Substitute

WHERE will you find a finer tribute to a mother than this by a great Englishman? He said: "Take her for all and in all, I do not believe that any human being ever brought into the world, and carried through it a larger portion of original goodness than my dear mother. Everyone who knew her loved her, for she seemed to be made to be happy herself, and to make everyone happy within her little sphere."

Then John Wesley goes on to use still more lavish words: "God never blessed a human creature with a more cheerful disposition, a more generous spirit, a sweeter temper, or a tenderer heart. I remember that when first I understood what death was, and began to think of it, the most fearful thought it induced was that of losing my mother; it seemed to me more than I could bear, and I used to hope that I might die first."

From all we can learn of Susanna Wesley it would seem that her son did not overdo her praises. We might suppose therefore that if her sons had just lived up to their inherited religious teachings that would have been enough.

Especially might this seem true as regards John, for in his mother's diary of May 17, 1707, she wrote: "I do intend to be more particularly careful with the soul of this child than ever I have been; that I may instill into his mind the

principles of true religion and virtue. The Lord give me grace to do it sincerely and prudently."

So it would seem that if John Wesley could have inherited his mother's religious principles and virtues that would have been enough. But experience goes to show that *imitation is not enough*. Every individual must find out for himself the realities of religion. And religion is more than a relationship of one human being to another. Religion is a relation with the Divine One.

The fact is that Wesley's life, up to the time of his Aldersgate experience (May 24, 1738), when his heart "was strangely warmed," was to a considerable extent an imitation of his mother's life and teachings. We do not criticize him for that. Rather, we thank God for Susanna Wesley. But the insufficiency of inherited religion later came to light when Wesley, upon the high seas returning to America, declared, "I went to America to convert the Indians; but oh! who will convert me?"

Now, Wesley's awakening to his need of direct communion with God is perfectly in line with the New-Testament pattern. Pentecost was God's supreme declaration of the privilege and necessity of first-hand religion. On that day in Jerusalem there were plenty of evidences that God does speak directly to men.

Yes and to *all* men! Later on the apostle Peter was to say, "I perceive that God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10. 34). But before that—on this day of Pentecost—he cries, "The promise is unto you, and your children, and to *all* that are afar off" (Acts 2. 39).

The Jews had always believed that God spoke directly to special persons. But now the New Day had come in accord with the promise: "I will pour out my spirit on *all* flesh" (Acts 2. 17). The result was that "they that gladly received the word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (Acts 2. 41).

But there were other thousands who went to their homes that night saying something like this: "Understand it or not, we have felt the very presence of God today. One thing is certain—those men had been in touch with the Eternal and He had been saying things to them."

Of course the permanent message of Pentecost is just this: Not the speaking in tongues or demonstrations of fire or the sound of rushing wind, but the monumental truth that the Spirit of God does speak directly to the spirits of men. And yet there were those in the early Church—just as there are many in the Church today—who never learned the lesson of the living Presence. The outstanding illustration of this fact is found in the little church at Ephesus. We see Paul going into the meeting of that small congregation and asking himself, "What is the matter with this group?" And then the anxious question, "Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?" (Acts 19. 2).

No one has pictured that situation better than Dr. J. H. Jowett.¹ He says: "Why did he [Paul] put the anxious question? Were there some omi-

¹ *The Passion for Souls*. Fleming H. Revell Company, New York.

nous signs of impoverishment which aroused this painful wonder? Did he miss something? He certainly did not suspect the reality and sincerity of their faith. The separation of this little body of twelve men from the mighty drift and popular fashion of Ephesian life was itself all-sufficient proof that they were moving in the fear of the Lord. And yet to the apostle's trained and discerning eye there was something lacking. . . . Perhaps it was a look of defeat in their tired eyes—the expression of exhausted reserves, the lack of exuberance, the want of a swinging and jubilant optimism. Perhaps it was the absence of the bird-note from their religious life. I know not what the signs may have been, but some conspicuous gap yawned before the apostle's penetrating vision, which prompted him to ask this trembling searching question, 'Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?' And the half-spent and weary souls replied, 'Nay, we did not so much as hear whether the Holy Ghost was given.' ”

And Doctor Jowett goes on to point to the lesson. He says: “How imperfect their equipment! How inadequate their resources! . . . The day of Pentecost had come; the marvelous promises had been fulfilled; the wonder ministry had begun; but these disciples were still in the pre-Pentecostal days; they were behind the spiritual times.”

Now let us try to imagine the early Church without Pentecost! You cannot do it. Those disciples would still be shuddering behind closed doors “for fear of the Jews.” The Christian

Church would never have been born had not the Spirit-Presence of the Christ laid hold upon them in that Upper Room. Nor can you think of the John Wesley who shuddered on shipboard in the Atlantic storm as being one who could lead a religious movement that would belt the world. First there must be a new John Wesley! One who would learn the lesson of Pentecost: that God's Spirit does witness directly to man's spirit that we are the sons of God. Oh, no, the imitation of a beautiful life is not enough—even though it be the life of Jesus. We must have the Life Himself. There can be no substitute for the living Presence!



Prayer

Lover of our Souls, Giver of peace that passeth knowledge, in the morning we come to Thee for food. It is not bread for our bodies, it is bread for our spirits that we seek. With the sunrise comes the thought of Thee. All Thy world is full of Thy glory.

We would be dull indeed did not our hearts leap up to greet Thee with the dawn. And yet how dead and dull we often are! The flesh is so much with us. How much easier to hear the voice of the body calling for food than the voice of our spirits crying for God! How slow we are to set the breakfast for our souls! O Christ, save us from ourselves; press Thy spirit presence on us in the morning hour. So break to us each day the bread of life. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Motherstown

A mother is a wondrous thing! God knows
She is a refuge from the toughest storm that blows!
I do not mean that she has wings like angels,
Or lives through all the days in heights sublime,
Is never touched by sordid things of sense and time;
Or that she never did a grievous wrong;
That life for her is just one holy song;
(It makes me sick to hear the preachers paint
The wings on womankind!)

Nay, this is what I mean, God knows
My mother is a refuge from the toughest storm that blows;
When all the world has turned me down,
I just hike back to Motherstown,
And, come I soon or come I late,
I find my mother at the gate;
And though I'm soiled with sin or bowed with care,
I find her waiting, waiting, waiting there!

.
No matter what I may not do or may not be,
I know one heart that's ever turned toward me;
And when at last they place her in the sod,
Beside my mother's grave I'll think of God!

VI

When the World Wonders

HENRY DRUMMOND made a strikingly true statement when he said, "Ten Christians that become notably different and far better Christians would produce a greater effect in the world than a hundred who were induced to enter the Christian life for the first time." Then this great Englishman went on to explain, "The world will begin to wonder at the Church far more *through something that happens to the Christian people themselves* than it will through some showy and dramatic increase of its numbers."

Let no one suppose that Henry Drummond is minimizing the importance of getting people to confess Christ and join the Church, for the great evangelist was constantly at this work. What he is lamenting is the fact that so many of us, after we have joined the Church, never startle our friends and the outside world with our changed lives. Like the little girl who explained to her mother why she fell out of bed, many of us could say about our church membership, "I guess I went to sleep too near where I got in!"

That is what Drummond was concerned about; and that is the trouble that appears when church members do not transform their "hearsay" religion into a first-hand experience of Christ. Their religion very quickly becomes static! But there was nothing static about the religion of those

disciples who gave their witness in those days following Pentecost. It was then that the world began to wonder at the disciples of Christ. Something had happened to them. We should never forget that Drummond-phrase, "Something that happens to Christian people themselves." Only this will compel the world to wonder at the Church.

And Henry Drummond was speaking out of his own experience of a personal Pentecost—when Christ became real to him! Later he said, "I have only one passion; that is Christ." And those who knew him understood and remembered. Among such was a young man named Henry Jowett.

In later years Doctor Jowett, speaking at Mount Hermon on a commencement day, said: "For four years during my university course, it was my privilege to listen to Henry Drummond every Sunday night; sixteen hundred students each Sabbath evening crowded into the church to hear him, and I can still remember how, at the close of nearly every address, he would close his Bible, stand straight with his hands on his hips, search us with those eagle eyes, and say: 'Men, do you mean business? Is your religion to be a business or a toy? If you are going to play with it, I pray you, drop it. If you mean business, put out your hand and grasp God's, and then mean business all your life.'"

That's it, "Do you mean business?" When I read those words I think of some church members I have known to whom religion was indeed just "an inherited bit of propriety."

But I also think of others like Saint Paul who cried out: "I am pressing on, striving to lay hold of the prize for which Christ has also laid hold of me. . . . One thing I do—forgetting everything which is past and stretching forward to what lies in front of me, with my eyes fixed on the goal I push on to secure the prize of God's heavenward call in Christ Jesus." Then he adds, "Let all of us who are mature believers cherish these thoughts" (Philippians 3. 12-15, Weymouth).

The question is whether we are going to seek to be "mature believers" or to be content to remain mere "babes in Christ." I heard a college boy say to his college-girl sister a little while ago, "Sis, are'nt you ever going to grow up?" How many times some of us who are pastors feel like asking some members of the Church a similar question. And—more to the point—how often the Christ must have wished to say similar words to us all!

Now, one of the most remarkable religious revivals of modern times has been the Wesleyan Movement which we have frequently referred to. Remember that it began *after* John Wesley's Aldersgate experience on the night of May 24, 1738. Indeed, it has been so remarkable in its spread around the world and in its effect upon other moral and social movements that we ought to look for the secret of its power.

I think we shall have to agree that it is found, to a large extent, in the fact that John Wesley and his preachers did expect "something to happen to Christian people themselves," *after* they had been converted and had united with the

Church. They were expected to receive "the second blessing." They were taught that they must "go on to perfection," until they should be "wholly sanctified."

Some moderns may not like these phrases very well, and we may differ with John Wesley in his interpretation of the doctrine of "Christian Perfection." But the outstanding fact is that, like the early Church Fathers, the followers of Wesley did expect something to happen, and to keep happening, in the lives of their converts after they were converted.

And they were not disappointed. Because we have discovered that the Fathers were mistaken in their teachings as to what the "second blessing" accomplished in the life of a believer—that it did not make unnecessary a third blessing and a fourth and many more—are we going to continue our blundering blindness as to the necessity of continuous surrender to the Holy Spirit?

To this point Bishop Francis J. McConnell says in his little book, so full of common sense, on *The Essentials of Methodism*¹ (p. 18): "No folly would be more complete than that which would go through Methodist history and strike out as unreal the experiences which our fathers called the blessings of entire sanctification." And a little later (p. 21) he adds: "Careful students of John Wesley's life have insisted that he never claimed the blessing of entire sanctification for himself, and Charles Wesley confessed himself increasingly perplexed at the contradiction which

¹The Abingdon Press. Reprinted by permission.

he saw between profession and practice in the lives of many believers. Still, with all the defects of the doctrine we must insist that it is essential to Methodism to keep alive the ideal at which it aims; that is, the bringing of all parts of life under subjection to the law of the Kingdom."

No modern Christian can get on very well without holding to this ideal of Christianizing all of life. We certainly need to take seriously Jesus' word, "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." But the aim of those Methodist leaders went still further. Their ultimate aim was the bringing of the total life under such full surrender to Jesus Christ, that they might have continuous communion with the invisible Presence.

"Walk in the light! so shalt thou know
That fellowship of love
His Spirit only can bestow,
Who reigns in light above."



Prayer

We thank Thee, living Lord, that Thou hast not made us to be spiritual dwarfs, but that, in Jesus Christ, Thou hast called us to be joint heirs in the illimitable majesty of the godly life. Thine is the power and the glory, and Thou hast offered us this sonship from on high. May we guard it well. May we not throw away our heritage for any mess of pottage that the world may give. Like sons of God—heirs of all the worlds to come—help us to keep our faces to the heights, lest

Thine image die within us and we become mere animals of earth. So give us this day our daily bread from heaven, and may Thy Spirit so have right of way within that we may know the comforting power of Thy presence. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



Morning Song

Give me a song, dear God, in the morning,
Give me a song at the break of the day,
Give me a song lest the hours grow weary,
Give me the help of a song on the way.

Days are so long and burdens so heavy,
Tired are the faces I see passing by,
They seem so hungry, dear God, and so helpless,
O how they need some song from on high!

.
So if I covet one gift in the morning,
It is the shine of the heavens in my face,
Banishing gloom for the worn and the weary,
Telling the story of infinite grace.

VII

Christian Experience

"Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine,
O what a foretaste of glory divine."

THERE is emotion in these lines. There must have been emotion in the heart of the author when she wrote the hymn. Fanny J. Crosby evidently had been in communion with the living Christ. Indeed, she was sure of it; and therefore she called her experience "Blessed Assurance."

That was religious experience! But it was more—it was Christian experience. Dr. Raymond Calkins has pointed out¹ that religious experience differs from all other kinds of experience, first, in that it is dominantly concerned with the idea of a Supreme Being; and, second, that religious experience involves "all our faculties—the mind, the will, as well as the feelings."

"Like tides on a crescent sea beach
When the moon is new and thin
Into our hearts high yearnings
Come welling and surging in.
They come from the distant ocean
Whose rim no foot has trod,
Some of us call it yearning,
But others call it God!"

So the poet writes down his religious experience. But that was not necessarily Christian experience

¹ See "The Supremacy of the Christian Experience," *Religion in Life*, Autumn Number, 1935, p. 530. The Abingdon Press.

any more than was the experience that came to the psalmist that night under the stars which led him to say,

"When I consider thy heaven, the work of thy fingers,
The moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained,
What is man, that thou art mindful of him?"

(Psalm 8. 3-4.)

"Christian experience," to again quote Doctor Calkins, "differentiates itself from religious experience in the discovery that the highest and most meaningful experience of God is to be had in that experience of God made possible for us in the person of Jesus Christ."²

But this does not mean that Christian experience denies the worth and validity of lesser forms of religious experience. On the contrary, the New Testament plainly recognizes that God has been speaking at all times to all kinds and conditions of people. As I write these sentences my train is passing through the Wind River Canyon in the mountains of Wyoming. From the train window I look out across the river to the twisted rocks that rise upward a thousand feet in majestic palisades until the afternoon sun gleams in shining splendor on the cathedral-like heights. It was just about a hundred years ago that the first white man found his way through this pass and wondered at the glory of God's handiwork. But the Indians had been there hundreds of years before that. And now I am here, feeling the religious emotion which in all probability others have felt who have passed this way. Now, my knowl-

² *Ibid.*, p. 530.

edge of God and my experience of His presence undoubtedly colors the concept of God that comes to me as I look. But what right have I to question the worth of the religious emotion that must have come to generations of prehistoric Indians as they gazed out over this wonderful scene?

Just so the New Testament recognizes the genuineness of all the forms of religious experience that have been known to men; even while it is also emphatic on the truth that all of these have their "completion and fulfillment in that historical form of religious experience which is presented to men in the person of Jesus Christ." This means that the hunger for God has been the universal hunger, and the quest for God has been the quest of every people; but only in Jesus Christ is God revealed as the near and living Presence.

As the writer of Hebrews declares, "God, who in ancient days, spoke to our forefathers in many distinct messages and by various methods through the Prophets, has at the end of these days spoken to us through a Son, who is the pre-destined Lord of the universe" (Hebrews 1. 1, 2, Weymouth).

It is Jesus, then, who finally and surely makes God known. Thus there is a twofold meaning in Jesus' words, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14. 6). It is not merely that we can only know the fullest and truest character of God as we see Him revealed in the life of the Son; but there is a still richer discovery, namely, that only those will be found with the surest consciousness of the Spirit-Presence who have found this in Jesus Christ.

India has been represented frequently as the

home of the most religious people in the world, but it is significant that one of our most experienced missionaries has declared that outside of the nationals who have been in contact with mission stations he has never discovered a person who was ready to say: "I have found God;" or, to use Paul's words, "I know him whom I have believed."

Now, it may appear that there are exceptions to such a statement, for here and there outside the Christian group, we do find remarkable religious personalities who seem to have come into a real consciousness of God. For instance, in modern times some Gandhi or Mozoomdar, or in Old-Testament times, some prophet or psalmist. Indeed, how about Job, who cries at last after an earnest search for God as reality, "I had heard of thee by hearsay, but now mine eyes have seen thee." Was he not speaking long before the time of Christ?

But was he? Saint John insists: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. . . . He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not" (John 1. 1-2; 10).

But wait! Some did recognize Him. For instance, a psalmist cries, "Whither shall I go from thy Presence? . . . If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me" (Psalm 139. 7, 9, 10).

Or who is willing to question that the sense of the nearness of God was upon the author of the

age-worn song: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. . . . Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me" (Psalm 23. 1, 4).

Evidently, we must be careful lest we seem to overlook the fact that the Spirit of Christ was working in the hearts of men even before "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father" (John 1. 14).

C. F. Andrews writes in *Christ in the Silence*.¹ "God is no respecter of persons, nor is his presence confined to any single race or portion of the earth: but 'in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.'" "So also," he says, "we have to recognize the same larger truth in our day, in those deeply religious Eastern lands where the Father has been seeking his true worshipers all down the centuries."

Then he goes on to tell the story of P. E. Mozoomdar, a Hindu seeker who found God in Christ but who never outwardly became a Christian. The following sentences speak for themselves. Mozoomdar says: "Nearly twenty years ago my troubles forced upon me the question of personal relationship to Christ. . . . Placed in youth beside a very pure and powerful character, I was helped to feel, by the law of contrast, that I was painfully imperfect and needed very much the grace of a saving God. . . . I was never taught to feel any undue leaning toward the Christian religion. But as the sense of sin grew upon me . . .

¹The Abingdon Press. Reprinted by permission.

I was mysteriously led to feel a personal affinity to the spirit of Christ. . . . Untaught by anyone, often discouraged and ridiculed, I persisted in according to Christ a tenderness of honor which arose in my heart unbidden. . . . Secretly I hunted the bookshops of Calcutta to gather the so-called likeness of Christ. I did not know—I cared not to think—whither all this would lead. . . . My inward trials and travails had reached a crisis. It was a week-day evening. The shades had thickened into darkness as I sat near a large tank in the Hindu College compound. . . . Suddenly it seemed to me—let me own it was revealed to me—that close to me there was a holier, more blessed, more loving Personality upon which I might repose my troubled head. Jesus was discovered in my heart as a strange, human, kindred love. The response of my nature was immediate. Jesus from that day became to me a reality whereon I might lean. . . . It was not a bodily Christ then; it is much less a bodily emanation now. It was a character, a Spirit, a holy, exalted self, whom I recognized as the true Son of God.”

In commenting on this Hindu’s experiences in seeking God and finding Him in the person of the living Christ, C. F. Andrews says: “Miracles of grace in the inner life, such as this story reveals, prove to us that the Spirit of the living God is everywhere at work in all ages changing the hearts of men. Far beyond the bounds of any human agency, or the direct ministry of the Christian Church, Christ’s personal presence is found,

and in that presence is the fulness of spiritual life."



Prayer

O Lord, our Lord, what a sorry time Thou dost have with us. How great Thy patience, how vast Thy love! How kindly Thou dost deal with our weaknesses and sins! O continue to have mercy upon us, dear God, according to Thy loving-kindness. For we do acknowledge our transgressions, and our sin is ever before us.

It must be that Thou canst see within our souls, that Thou dost know the battles that we fight, that Thou canst feel our dissatisfaction with ourselves—our words and thoughts and deeds. And Thou canst hear us almost say sometimes, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Oh, we thank Thee that Thou dost not take us at our word, that Thou wilt not let us go. In spite of all our weaknesses and sin that Thou dost see the hunger of our souls for Thee; that Thou dost know that we cannot be satisfied with less than the life that is victorious. Continue to give us strength, dear God; in spite of all our failures and defeats we will press on.

And we have pressed on, refreshed and strengthened by Thy faith in us. And we do share Thy faith that we can grow; that the years do see something of progress in our souls—an increasing victory over self, a growing kindliness toward our fellow men, a deeper passion to see Thy kingdom come on earth. Oh, increase our confidence

this day that we can do all things through Christ who strengthened us. In His dear name we ask. Amen.



I

Stars

Someone has said
That he who watches stars
Across the world's wide rim
"Needs no consoling creed
To succor him."

Did he forget
That none would watch the stars
"Across the world's wide rim"
Had not the Lord of all
First planted stars
Deep in the heart
Of him?

II

Evening and Morning¹

A cricket's chirrup,
A tender sky,
Night is oncoming,
And day must die!

A twilight hush,
An evening star,
Gloomy the night,
But God is not far!

A blaze in the east,
A burnished sky,
God on the hilltop;
Day cannot die!

¹ As the Scripture puts it—not "morning and evening."

PART FOUR

THE CHRISTIAN'S TECHNIQUE

- I. WHERE WE START**
- II. THE WAR ON SIN**
- III. THE COMMAND TO WITNESS**
- IV. THE NEW WORLD PASSION**
- V. THE DAILY NECESSITY**
- VI. THE DAILY METHOD**
- VII. THE GREAT DISCOVERY**

I

Where We Start

"THERE is something more to Christianity than the New Testament makes clear." This is the rather startling statement which the distinguished president of a well-known theological seminary makes in a recent book.¹

But perhaps it isn't the fault of the New Testament that this "something more" is not made evident to all of us. Perhaps it is the reader's fault if he doesn't discover it.

In any case the statement is well worth thinking about, for this "something more" in Christianity is desperately needed in the Church today. To me this "something more" is the Spirit-Presence we have been talking about in the preceding pages. Doctor Grant uses the words, "The Spiritual Christ."

"If we were to inquire," he says, "of almost any Christian in the first century [as to what the "something more" was] all the answers would point to the reality of the Spiritual Christ." Then he goes on to show that Christianity was more than a new ethical movement or a new revival of religion. He says: "It was the new spring-time of the Spirit: the critical turning-point had been reached in the history of mankind and of the whole universe; the Church was the organ and the

¹ *Frontiers of Christian Thinking*, by Frederick C. Grant, Willett, Clark & Company, Chap. II, "The Spiritual Christ."

scene of all kinds of new fresh powers of 'the age to come'; and *throned above and yet within his Church dwelt Christ, the Spiritual Lord of the new life.*"

"This Spiritual Christ, the Lord of the Church's Faith," Doctor Grant concludes, "is simply indispensable if we are to have a genuine historical interpretation of Christian origins, and see how the Christian religion actually arose in the first century."

What this scholar means seems to be just this: That in the background of the life and witness of the rank and file of Christians of the early Church was the consciousness of the Christ-Presence—no longer the visible Christ in the flesh but now the invisible Christ-Spirit who with unrestricted powers was manifest to His disciples as Comforter and Lord.

But it is not quite true that the New Testament does not make clear the fact of the Spiritual-Christ even if many have been blind to the New-Testament references as to His Presence. Yes, "blind" is the word, for if our eyes were opened, we should discover that the Eternal Christ became at Pentecost the ever-present Lord of His Church, the Guide and Comforter of His disciples. As Saint Paul said, "The Lord is the Spirit." Surely, Jesus never meant us to regard as a mere figure of speech His great promise, "Remember, I am with you always, day by day, until the Close of the Age" (Matthew 28. 20, Weymouth).

All of this takes us back to the promise in Saint John's Gospel with which we started these studies. There can be no doubt as to what Jesus meant

when He promised, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me. . . . He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him"(John 14. 18, 19, 21).

Let us repeat those wonderful words, "I . . . will manifest myself to him." And then let us repeat the prompt come-back of His disciples, "Lord, how is it?" "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?"

Years ago as a boy-preacher I heard that prince of missionaries, Bishop Thoburn, tell how, as he walked down the gangplank of the ship that brought him to India and put his feet for the first time on Indian soil, he was conscious of the Christ-Presence moving along by his side. I went home from that missionary meeting, as I presume others did, saying to myself: "I wonder if he really meant what he said? Or was he just using a figure of speech?"

Later on someone gave me Phillips Brooks's words: "It is no figure of speech. . . . He is here. I know him. He knows me. It is the realest thing in the world, and every day it grows realer." These words are worth repeating over and over again; they have come to be very precious to me. And so too has grown to be the experience of the Presence!

Then at last we come to the final question: How is it that we may come into this experience of the Reality of Christ? It is the same question the disciples asked in that Upper Room.

Can we find the answer to this question? What is the technique? Can we find the answer so that any truly sincere seeker can actually discover the Unseen for himself; and *know* that the Spirit of Christ does witness with his spirit?

In the quest for the Presence we can do no better than begin where Jesus told His disciples to begin. Their question was, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us?" He gave them this very plain answer: "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him" (John 14. 21).

First of all there is no magic about the process of finding Christ to be real. If we are to seek for a technique that will guide us into close fellowship with Christ, here is where we must begin: *We must definitely plan to know and to keep His commandments; and not by spasms of loyalty but as the major passion of our lives.* What Jesus said to His disciples was just this: "I will manifest myself to him who loves me enough to love my commandments." We must settle this in our thinking: there is no short-cut to companionship with God in Christ. We can all sympathize with one who wrote,

"I sometimes wish that I might do
Just one grand deed and die,
And by that one grand deed mount up
To meet God in the sky."

We all feel that way sometimes! But in our saner moments we know the truth of the lines that follow

"But such is not Thy way, dear Lord,
Not such is Thy decree,
For day by day and step by step
Our souls must climb to Thee."

And the day-by-day climbing must be done on the ladder of the commandments of Jesus!

And the reason ought to be perfectly obvious. We can have real fellowship with anyone only in proportion as we hold things in common with that one. It is so too with the Supreme Person. And no magic of any kind can change this fundamental fact.

This is why it may be said that religion in its primitive forms is often mere magic, but at its best, religion is fellowship. So Christ taught; but even centuries before that the Hebrew prophets had rebuked the worshipers who thought that the mere slaughter of a lamb on the altar of the temple, or the mere pouring out of "rivers of oil," could serve as magic formulae to gain the favor of God. The Lord said, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." That was the price of fellowship with God. "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6. 8.)

So with Jesus, religion was fundamentally a fellowship with God in character and purpose; and that fellowship must always be builded upon a reverence for the commandments of God. And this is why, over and over again, in that last night with His disciples He speaks such words as these: "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15. 14). "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I

have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (John 15. 10). "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14. 23).

Surely, here is the beginning of any technique that leads into companionship with the Presence. *Moreover, it is certain that, without this determination to make obedience to Christ the ruling passion, all other techniques will be followed in vain.*



Prayer

O God, be with us this day and bless us, and cause Thy face to shine upon us.

But we understand not what we ask. How can a man look on the face of God? But this we know, that Thou dost understand the hunger of our hearts for Thee.

This is indeed our hope and joy, to know that Thou hast implanted deep this hunger in the human soul for Thee; that Thou hast said, "Blessed are the hungry, for they shall be filled."

So break to us, dear God, this day the bread of life, through Jesus Christ. Amen.



A Meditation

Just to greet Thee in the morning,
 Just to know Thy presence here,
 In this room, my Lord, beside me—
 This is life and peace and cheer!

Understand it? Oh, how can I!
For I'm just a little child,
Just a kindergarten fellow,
In a school so wide and wild.

Yes, it may be I'm mistaken,
That there is no Presence near,
Just a kind of "mental picture"
That has grown both real and dear;

But of one thing I am certain
As I greet Him here each day—
That both peace and power come to me,
And go with me on my way!

Then I turn the sacred pages
To the promise in His Word,
That He gave before He left them,
That His first disciples heard:

"No I will not leave you orphans
If to me you will be true,
Though the worldlings cannot see me
I'll be manifest to you."

So I greet Thee in the morning,
So I find Thy presence here,
In this room, my Lord, beside me;
This is life and peace and cheer!

II

The War On Sin

"JUST the same it must be a great thing to really know that your sins are forgiven." The speaker was a seller of magazines. He stood with me in my garden.

I was the man with the hoe. Fifty feet to the west the clear waters of Seneca Lake were rippling in the summer breeze. A hundred yards to the east the apple trees upon my hilltop glistened in the morning sun.

It was one of those days when you exclaim, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."

It was easy to "talk religion" that morning and he was soon saying: "No, I don't belong to any church; my wife did, and I used to go with her before she died—last year. We went to the ——— Church in Rochester. She enjoyed it, and I did in a way. But I don't like so much noise. And sometimes they speak in what they call 'tongues.' That gives me the creeps.

"But"—he paused—"they seem to be in earnest, and they seem to know what they believe. And I like that; its more than you can say about some church people."

Then it was that the wistful note came into his voice and he added, "Just the same it must be a great thing to know that your sins are forgiven!"

Out there in my garden I agreed with the stranger. "I don't like too much noise either. And certainly I agree with Saint Paul that if anyone is going to 'speak in tongues,' that he is in duty bound to interpret what he is saying. But you are right, my friend; we can forgive a good deal in people if they are truly in earnest. And what you said last is eternally true: It is a great thing to know that your sins are forgiven—that you are right with God."

I continued: "Men have always felt as you do. Some three thousand years ago a man just like us, with the same kind of yearning in his heart, cried, 'Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions, . . . cleanse me from my sin.' That is in the fifty-first psalm.

"Yes," I went on—and the magazine man was listening—"we all feel at times as the psalmist did. And, too, we may all find the peace and joy that he found. And I'm sure he found it. Indeed, there is good reason to suppose that this man was the same psalm writer who later cried—out of the joyful consciousness of sins forgiven—"Happy is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

"Yes, my friend," I ended, "you are right. It is a great thing to know that your sins are forgiven—that there are no clouds between you and God."

Now, I have told this summertime story because of my conviction that sin—sin unacknowledged and sin unrepented of—is the most

common barrier to fellowship with God and communion with the Presence. We must never forget that the practice of the Presence is inseparably linked with keeping the commandments. Jesus said so, and the moral law and the law of the whole universe is behind Him.

Therefore the first step in keeping the commands of Jesus is a thoroughgoing repentance toward the sins we know are sins—a purpose to tolerate them no longer.

We ask sometimes why more people don't attend church. Granted that too often they "don't get anything worth while from the pulpit," but there is another big reason. Many persons feel too acutely their sins when they go into the House of God. And so they stay away. They are living defeated lives. They stopped fighting their sins long ago, and they don't want to be made uncomfortable.

This fight against sin is no half-hearted business. It means a declaration of war—and war to the end. And it certainly is the responsibility of the pulpit to see to it that we, as church members, do not slump into a tolerant attitude toward the sins we know are sins. Constantly we must "press on."

Out of the shame of my coward heart,
 Out of my night of defeat,
 Lift me, O God, to the battle again,
 Cover my bitter retreat.

.

Beaten! but still undefeated, I pray,
 Thou of unconquerable hand,
 Reach me my poor broken saber again,
 I pledge thee to die or to stand!

But a chief source of trouble is found in the things we have not been willing to call sins—an uncontrolled temper, for instance. We are apt to call it "righteous indignation." Or the unbridled appetite—forgetting that a man was made to be master of his appetites and not to be mastered by them. Or we justify our unfriendly attitude toward someone by the hurt he has given us—real or imagined.

One of the most helpful commands of Jesus is His demand that "if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matthew 5. 23-24).

It is easy to see that there is a good reason for such a command. Experience teaches what it is: that none can nurse a grudge against his neighbor and keep clear skies between himself and the Father of us all. Understand it or not, there is a law behind this truth just as inexorable as the law of gravitation.

This is why, over and over again during those final hours with His disciples, Jesus repeats, "A new commandment I give unto you: That ye love one another" (John 13. 34). A dozen times He said it. Evidently, He knew that to have real communion with God without maintaining a forgiving attitude toward our neighbors is a practical impossibility.

Perhaps John Wesley's historic experience at Aldersgate Street is an illustration to this point. Why does he say in his *Journal*, "I began to pray

with all my might for those who had in a more especial manner despitefully used me and persecuted me”?

He writes this in connection with his famous testimony: “I felt my heart strangely warmed, . . . and an assurance was given me that He had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*.” May it not be that Wesley’s natural vindictiveness and love for a fight was one of the hindrances that so long kept him from being sure of the forgiveness of his sins and the reality of the Presence?

It is true that Saint Paul exhorts us to “fight the good fight of faith” (1 Timothy 6. 12). There is no doubt that Wesley was a very apt pupil of the earlier apostle in this regard. But Saint Paul also said, “Bless them which persecute you” (Romans 12. 14); and this was not so easy—not for the son of the Epworth parsonage; nor for any of us, for that matter.

And yet this unwillingness to forgive *and* forget is, in the mind of Jesus and in experience, the test of how eager we are to practice the Presence of God. Therefore He said, “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God”; and, “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst. . . : for they shall be filled.”

Out of all this it would seem that we can deduce the working principle that one vital condition of continuous communion with the Presence is good will toward friend and enemy alike. Jesus taught us to pray, “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive.”

But there are other sins! And any sin will cloud the face of God. The peril of emphasizing

some particular transgression, even though it may be common and deadly, is that some other transgression is equally hideous and equally common. Christ's challenge is against all sin. "Ye shall be perfect," He said. So Paul cried, "Sin shall not have dominion over you" (Romans 6. 14).

Referring again to John Wesley, it is interesting to recall that he translated for his followers those fine Moravian lines:

"Is there a thing beneath the sun
That strives with Thee my heart to share?
Oh, tear it thence and reign alone,
The Lord of every motion there!"



Prayer

O God, we turn to Thee as little children, wearied with the day, turn home. We are wearied with the conflict of life, its burdens, its sore defeats, its perplexities and disappointments, and sometimes we grow weary with what we call its pleasures and its successes. We turn to Thee for rest.

May Thy eternal calm possess our hearts. From our hurry and worry we flee to Thy quietness and peace; from the heat of our aimless strivings to the cooling refuge of Thy Presence.

Forgive our wanderings this day; and welcome us to Thy outstretched arms. Give us eyes to see Thy face and ears to hear Thy voice; O take us to Thy heart! Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Blind Beggar

I

Can God see me?

When mighty universes glare
 His face, and flaming suns demand His care?
 Among such giants, can it be—
 So small a thing am I—Canst Thou see me?

Can God find me?

Among the teeming throng,
 The myriad millions, dare I long
 For Him, or dream that He could give
 My outstretched hand the grasp for which I live?

Can God hear me?

When angels raise their songs on high,
 And kings in adoration lift their cry;
 Down in my humble alley of a life
 Is there a God who hears amidst the strife?

II

Thank God I see

A picture by the road from Galilee:
 Thou poor blind beggar! And the heart of thee,
 Pleading amidst the tumult and the throng,
 Crying to Him (the Lord for whom I long!),
 Crying while scoffers passing jeer
 And drown thy voice! No human ear
 Could catch the burning words ye plead,
 No human heart could see or sense thy need.

Can He hear thee?

He stops, He calls! What do I hear Him say?
 "Some heart in need is calling me! Give way!"

.

III

O Love Divine! Thy soul hath eyes to see,
 O Christ Divine! I too cry out to Thee,
 I too a beggar by the roadside lost,
 I too by many a tempest tossed;
 Nay, Christ, O do not pass me by;
 Speak, Lord, O speak or else I die!

III

The Command to Witness

I HAVE referred frequently in these pages to John Wesley's *Journal*. I have done so for two reasons. First, because I believe it furnishes more data for the study of personal experience with God than any other document outside the New Testament.

In the second place, the validity of Wesley's discovery of God's reality is attested by the results which this man's life had, not only upon the religious but upon the secular history of his own and later times.

For instance, in a memorable book published about a generation ago, Dr. W. H. Fitchett¹ makes a striking statement in connection with his question, "What was it really happened in that little room in Aldersgate Street on that night of May 24, 1738?"

He says: "Something did happen: something memorable, something enduring. It changed Wesley's life. It lifted him as a breath, out of doubt into certainty. It transfigured weakness into power. Nay, it did something more; *it changed the course of history!* . . . But for it there would be no Methodist Church under the sky, and English-speaking Protestantism itself, if it still survived—or if it had not found another Wesley—would be bankrupt of spiritual force."

¹ *Wesley and His Century*, W. H. Fitchett, p. 126. The Abingdon Press. Reprinted by permission.

There are two meaningful incidents that happened in connection with this heart-warming that came to John Wesley. We have already seen one of them in his praying for "those who had in a more especial manner spitefully used me and persecuted me." The other was the testimony which he gave immediately following the "assurance" that came into his life that memorable hour. He says, "I then testified openly to all there what I now first felt in my heart."

It is hard to believe that a man with Wesley's temperament could have given a very emotional testimony. What seems to have been perfectly clear to him was that witnessing to the consciousness of the Spirit-Presence was a necessary part of the process by which he was to keep his fellowship with the unseen Christ. *Therefore may we not wonder if one real reason why the Presence does not become more real to many of us is because we do not witness as frequently as we should to what we have discovered?*

Of course there is another important reason for testimony. Bertha Condé, in *The Human Element in the Making of a Christian*, indicates this by a conversation between two friends. Says the first: "The one thing of which I am sure these days is that I am not sure of anything. I want something real, something that will show this mad world how to get a grip on something solid."

"How about God?" asked his friend. "He is real to some of us."

"Well, if he is, why don't all of you begin to make him real to the rest of us? *He can't be very real to most Christians, or they wouldn't*

succeed so well in keeping him out of their conversation. If anyone has help, this is the time of all times to give it."

Now, all through John Wesley's ministry there was a constant insistence on the importance of testimony both for the sake of those who needed to hear and especially for those who were expected to grow in fellowship with God. May we, therefore, believe that one of the present weaknesses of the older Protestant groups is this general abandonment of testimony both within and outside of the worshipping congregation—and this at a time when new religious groups are appropriating the testimony method for spiritual growth as sanctioned both by experience and Scripture?

It is significant that the first building that John Wesley purchased for the Methodists—at Bristol, England, on April 2, 1739—seems to have been for the purpose of finding a place where his followers could be trained in Christian conversation and testimony. As Wesley put it: "For those whom the Holy Spirit himself had drawn together in the common experience of conscious forgiveness, or personal salvation, and the assurance of adoption of the children of God."

One of the passages of Scripture frequently quoted by the early Methodists was the eleventh verse of the twelfth chapter of Revelation, "And they overcame . . . by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony."

But, as we have already indicated, testimony is emphasized in the Scriptures not merely as an approved spiritual exercise, but as a Christ-commanded method for reaching the unsaved. His

disciples were to *share* with their neighbors and friends—and even enemies—what they had received.

It was not mere head knowledge that they were to pass on. First, they were to receive the Holy Spirit into their hearts; whereupon “power” would be imparted to them; and then they were to go or stay—as the leading might be—but always *witnessing* as to what had been revealed to them of the gospel and of the presence of the Christ.

And Christ never intended that the spread of His gospel should depend on the silver-tongued pulpiteer or the impassioned prophet: Every disciple was to share with his neighbor, near and far, the mysteries of God. So it was *the sharing life* to which the Christian was called. Immediately the new disciple was to consider himself the steward of the “secret truths” of God: “I have found something that I want to share with you.” This was to be the essence of his message. It was great witnessing rather than great pulpитеering that led multitudes to decision for Christ and into the early Church.

And all of this was and is perfectly natural. If we have discovered God in Christ and have found the new life in Him, will we not desire to pass the story on? One thing is certain—unless we do so the story will lose for us its radiance and power!

A few years ago I ran across the remarkable story of a blind man who had found his sight. He said: “It is like coming into a new world. I have been blind for thirty years and my only con-

ception of the world has been as I saw it in nineteen hundred. Now that I have regained my sight, almost miraculously, everything is so changed that I must touch the objects around me to believe my eyes. I had never seen an automobile, a skyscraper, or an aeroplane. My impressions of those modern wonders were very vague. The picture of my wife which I have always carried in my mind was that of a girl in her late twenties, a girl with hazel eyes, dark hair, smooth face, and no trace of age. Now that God has given me back my sight I have found a new and very kindly woman. Her hair is gray now and she has changed in keeping with her age.

"My blindness was caused primarily from an injury suffered in the old homestead back in Ohio. My thirty years were very full and in many respects happy. I soon felt safe in my world of darkness.

"Sitting in my big armchair last Monday night, I suddenly seemed to see a curtain rise. Not wishing to frighten my wife who was reading to me, I said, very calmly, 'Something has happened. I believe I can see.'

"Then I was sure that I saw the davenport with a blue pillow and a gold, and then I saw a strange kindly-faced woman whom I did not know. 'What is it?' said the woman, and then I knew it was my wife. She started to cry. 'Don't cry,' I said. 'Laugh and be happy.' She almost fell and I caught her and helped her back to her chair.

"Now, after four days of sight, the world is beginning to take on proportions again. I am very happy but I can scarcely sleep nights for

thinking about it. Yesterday I saw flowers for the first time in thirty years and hung around them like a bee."

What an experience, to be in darkness for thirty years and then find the light! A few weeks ago I wrote to the author of this story. I wanted to know first hand that it was true. He answered me from his home in the city of Chicago: "Yes, it is all true. A few days after it happened I wrote the account of it. *I couldn't help it. I wanted to express my gratitude to my physician and to give some encouragement to others who were blind.*"

I wonder if this isn't likewise the order of procedure in the spiritual universe? First a discovery of the Light, then testimony! So Jesus said in a final message to His disciples, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses" (Acts 1. 8, Weymouth).



Prayer

O Love Divine, eternal is Thy mercy. We give thanks to Thee for Thy infinite compassion for Thou hast sought after all men, not willing that any should perish. Such love has drawn us to Thyself, until in our own hearts, we long to possess the spirit of Thy loving-kindness.

Oh, keep us from wounding any heart today, or adding to the burden of any life. Even more, help us to hear the voices of our brothers crying from the desolate places of sin and self-destruction. Help us that, by some kindly word or com-

passionate deed, we may help to lead them back to the Father's house, the abundant life, and the Everlasting Love. In Jesus' name. Amen.



A Testimony

I can but testify;
Words may not tell
This dear companionship
I know so well;

Ears may be deaf,
Eyes may not see
This Presence who comes near
And speaks with me;

But realer than this world
With all its grace
Grows the Invisible
And the Unseen Face!

IV

The New World Passion

"I HAVE something wonderful to tell you. I am not afraid of the future now. I have got back my faith in God." And the man, who the day before was in the depths of despair, because the physicians had told him that within a year he would be totally blind, gripped his friend's hand and continued:

"This is what happened: Last night I sat in my home, utterly dejected. One misfortune after another had overtaken me. I began to wonder whether life was worth going on with at all; and dark and ugly suggestions began to creep into my mind. Almost in despair, I put my head down on my arms on the table, feeling that I was, of all men, the most miserable. Suddenly, I noticed that my outstretched hand was resting on something. As I groped in the darkness, I found that it was the letters of the Braille. I felt along with my fingers, and this is the message that God flashed into my darkened life: 'The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.' It was the last verse of the 34th Psalm, and it sounded in every corridor of my being like the voice of the Eternal. I am not afraid of the future now. I know that He will carry me through."

This story which I found today¹ brings a thrill

¹ Bible Society Record, December, 1935.

with it, but it also brings some questions. Would this glad experience of trust in God have come to this blind man but for those Christians who had grasped some of the social implications of Jesus' gospel and set themselves, a century ago and since, to produce some type of printing that could be read by the blind?

And other questions follow. This man had lost his employment as the darkness came on. What is a Christian society going to do about that? No self-respecting person, blind or not, is going to be satisfied with mere charity. The answer is that Christ's followers have set up institutions to which the blind may go to learn how to make a living. But this is only a beginning. Must we not go on with the task of giving social security to the handicapped if we are really to keep the commands of Jesus?

Then this man, according to the story, learned that his few investments were imperiled through the failure of banks, through nationwide gambling, and the breakdown of the economic order. What are the followers of Jesus going to do about that? He taught us to pray, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth." That means so much more than some of us have thought. That brings us right down to where we live in everyday transactions—in the market place, in business, in property, in *money*. How few of us have discovered the spiritual content of money!

Some of us have prayed for the "great revival" that is going to usher in the Kingdom age. We will have to do more than pray. The key to such a revival will probably be found in Jesus'

command, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth."

How dare we disobey if we expect to have companionship with the Christ-Spirit? How dare we be greedy about "profits" for *ourselves* when great social and spiritual problems are crying for solution?

Of course my business should be conducted in a fashion that will show a profit. But are profits to be my main motive? Not if I am a Christian! If I am a follower of Jesus, my store or mill or farm must not be regarded as the means by which I lay up treasure for *myself*, but the means of paying my expenses and the expenses of my associates as we go about the supreme business of working with Christ to build the kingdom of God on earth. So our attitude toward property and money is most significant!

How frequently we have mouthed the reputed words of Horace Bushnell concerning the final "great revival"! But have we really sensed the truth that lies within the statement? "One more revival, only one, is needed, the revival of Christian stewardship, the consecration of the money power to God. When that revival comes, the kingdom of God will come in a day."

So it will! But let us not fool ourselves by thinking of the "other fellow's" money. First let us think of our own. There can be no substitute for the consecration of "*my* money" to God. It is easy to talk about social security plans and new economic orders—and we must go on talking and planning and praying to improve the social program—but the best legislation that men can

devise on this matter will never bring in the kingdom of God unless, along with it, we as individuals get rid of our own sinful covetousness and obey Jesus' command regarding money.

Here is the place to begin. Let us pray, "Lord, send the revival by which Christ shall dominate business and government and international relations." But let us add, "Lord, let the revival begin with me." Good will must determine the affairs of the world if wars are to end. But what man with common sense can expect this to come to pass by compelling the "big fellows" in business and politics, or anywhere else, to Christianize their affairs? Not until the rank and file of us—the "little fellows"—honestly set out to obey Jesus in our everyday relations will the Kingdom of Christ come to any apparent extent.

Yes, and only as I do this in my own life will I apprehend the reality of the Presence. Let us remind ourselves again of the promise of Jesus: "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, . . . I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."¹

Solitary religion is not enough. Both the Mount of Transfiguration and the Crowds on the Street are necessary to our spiritual devel-

¹ Dr. R. I. Roberts makes the following pertinent comment: "God never seems so real as when account is opened with Him and one makes check-writing part of worship. One's banker is never nebulous; neither is the grocer nor the clothier. Anybody you do business with is real enough because of frequent contacts that touch daily living, so God is real and near and natural to the man who keeps account with Him, who sets his giving to the music of worship, who makes money into altar stairways leading into the holy of holies."

opment. Woe to the man who never says to himself,

"Let me live in my house by the side of the road,
And be a friend to man."

Some professing Christians have thought they could separate Jesus' promise, "Lo, I am with you alway" (Matthew 28. 20), from the command, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations" (Matthew 28. 19), but it can't be done. The two are inseparable.

But how slowly we learn! How patient is Christ! If we are tempted to impatience sometimes over the slowness with which our people get their eyes opened to God's program for a really Christian world, we may also recall the lukewarmness with which so-called good people have regarded the Great Commission.

"Why do you get all heated up over the heathen?" asked a well-groomed member of my church at the close of my missionary sermon some years ago. "Do you think that God is going to send them to hell just because they haven't heard of our Christ?"

Now, what can be done for that kind of a churchman? "Send them to hell," I repeated. "Can't you see that it is not a matter of sending them to hell; they are there already! Christ has commissioned us to help Him get them out!"

I wish I could believe that the critic of my missionary passion was an exceptional case. On the contrary, there is much evidence that he represents a large cross section of the Christian Church. And, generally speaking, it is a similar

cross section that is irritated when the pulpit stresses strongly the social implications of the gospel message. No wonder that the late Bishop Earl Cranston exclaimed: "It seems incredible that men, confessing themselves redeemed and regenerated, are still debating the obligations of stewardship. It cannot be that they . . . realize how desperate is their trifling with God and their own souls." So it would seem that we need to think over and over the great truths in Frank Mason North's noble hymn—

"Where cross the crowded ways of life,
Where sound the cries of race and clan,
Above the noise of selfish strife,
We hear thy voice, O son of man!"



Prayer

Eternal Christ, in whom we live and move and have our being, in whose heart our sins are felt, our yearnings known, cleanse us, we pray, from every stain of sin and wrong; grant us the nearness of Thy presence every hour; and, when the evening comes, the joy of having helped to build Thy kingdom in the earth this day. To the glory of Thy great and holy name. Amen.



Morning at Lafayette Square

God bless them every one!
Deep in my heart for them I pray,
These men and women of the workaday.

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Face forward to their tasks they go
With eager step. But some with feet so slow!
O bless them every one, Dear God, each day;
Deep in my heart for them I pray.

God bless them every one!
I hear their footfalls on the pavement beat,
I see them crowding down the busy street,
I love to watch their faces from my window seat:
That youth so full of eagerness and life;
That sad-faced woman, she may be a drunkard's wife;
See that old man! it's time that he was through
With work. Perhaps he'd gladly be if we but knew.
And so I bless them every one in Christ's dear name—
The old, the young, saint, sinner—all the same,
For they are brave and (from their faces) who can tell
What joys or sorrows in their bosoms dwell?

God bless them every one!
Deep in my heart for them I pray,
These men and women of the workaday.
Face forward to their tasks they go
With eager step. But some with feet so slow!
O bless them every one, Dear God, I pray,
O how they need Thee in their workaday!

V

The Daily Necessity

THE late Theodore Roosevelt, in referring to the importance of regular attendance upon public worship, once remarked to this effect: "You may worship God anywhere at any time, but the chances are that you will not do so unless you have first learned to worship Him somewhere in some special place at some particular time."

What the great American was really pointing out was the need we all have of some technique of worship, regularly employed, if we are to attain reality in our quest for God.

There are two things to be remembered in this connection. Not only the necessity of good technique but, what is just as important, the regular practice of it. "Unless a thing is done regularly it is not done easily. Desultory church attendance is hard: One has to fight a battle every Sunday. And no one is strong enough to survive an ordeal like that."

And what is true of church attendance is true of every other item in our program of communion with God. Let us once decide that churchgoing, or the daily reading of the Scriptures, or the quiet hour, or the evening or the noonday period of meditation—or all of them—deserve a fixed place in the schedule of our life, and the battle is won.

It may be that there are some persons who have

found a close and deepening communion with God without a program—without some kind of a technique of regular daily procedure—but this is not the testimony of most of the men who have “made God real.”

Dean Inge is just talking common sense when he says, “If we spend sixteen hours a day dealing with tangible things and only five minutes a day dealing with God, is it any wonder that tangible things are two hundred times more real than God?” So for most of us the secret of finding God real is discovered when we *determine* upon some sincere program of daily communion with the unseen Presence.

Years ago I was gripped by this truth: “No man is likely to do much good in prayer who does not begin by looking upon it in the light of a work to be prepared for and persevered in with all the earnestness which we bring to bear upon subjects which are at once most interesting and most necessary” (Bishop Hamilton of Salisbury).

To look at the same truth from another angle, Christina Rossetti is credited with saying that “the Master never asks us such busy service as leaves no time for resting at his feet.” Someone else has put it in these words: “You can do more than pray after you have prayed but you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed.”

Then, first of all, we must recognize the absolute necessity of having a program of regular daily communion with the Presence. If ever anyone could have gotten along without such a program of communion with the Father it was Jesus.

On the contrary, the Gospels repeatedly refer to His habit of prayer:

"He went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him. And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray . . ." (Luke 22. 39, 40).

"In the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed" (Mark 1. 35).

He "constrained his disciples to get into a ship, . . . and when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray" (Matthew 14. 22, 23).

A few years ago an experience came to me that brought home not only the necessity of a technique of worship, but taught me how easy it is to remain for years a member in the Church without ever rising to a decision to maintain a program of daily worship.

I record this story in spite of the rebuke which it seems to bring to my own ministry. One of my sixteen hundred members sat before me in my study. "I came to see if you would give me my church letter," she said.

Various questions flashed into my mind. "What have I done now?" said the human minister. "Why do you want to take your membership from this church?" "What has happened?" "Where do you wish to go?" At length I drew from her the story that she wanted to join the Christian Science Church.

It was my opportunity to learn something. "Why," I said, "do you want to go there?"

This was her story: "I was sick. Some of my

friends brought the Christian Science 'reader.' She read to me. She came again and again. I think she helped me. Finally they insisted that I couldn't expect to get permanent help from Christian Science unless I would set apart a definite period in every day for meditation, reading and prayer."

Then my caller paused. A glad look came into her face as she said: "I took their advice. I have kept the daily period for several months, and out of it all *I have found God.*"

What could a pastor say to that? I asked, "How long have you been a member here in this church?"

"All my life. I joined when I was a girl. I went to Sunday school here. I came up through the Young People's Society. I really shall miss the old associations."

"And through the years you never learned to set apart some period in each day for Bible reading and prayer?"

She answered, "No."

Then I added, "My friend, I will be glad to give you a letter of dismissal; and if there are other members here like you whom you can lead into a discovery of God, I'll be glad to give them letters too."

Of course the lesson is clear. The church of her childhood had failed in its program of worship and of religious education as far as she was concerned.

How sadly this experience points to the need of a daily technique of worship faithfully followed! I never shall forget the last meeting I

had with Dr. A. P. Coman, one of the saintliest and strongest men of the Methodist Episcopal Church of a generation ago. It was in a hospital in Rochester, New York. It proved to be his last illness. After I had prayed with him, to the comfort of both of us, he looked up at me and with a wan smile said: "My friend, *keep prayed up to date*. When you are as sick as I am, you won't feel much like praying."

That reminds me of Doctor Moffatt's translation of Saint Paul's warning to young Timothy. He said, "Keep the great securities of your faith intact" (2 Timothy 1. 14). I suppose a banker would phrase it, "Keep your credit unimpaired." The American Standard Version translates it, "That good thing which was committed unto *thee* guard. . . ."

Yes, guard it—that good thing! Life eternal, the priceless gift of God! Guard it? But how can we unless we keep "the securities" of our faith intact? And how can we do that unless we pledge ourselves to keep sacred the holy habits of Scripture reading, and of worship and communion with Christ, our Lord?

Recently, in reading over my own *Journal* of some years ago, I came upon this statement: "One thing I have learned out of these years of seeking God—one thing of which I am most sure—that spiritual food is more important for me than food for my body. Therefore I have learned that early in the morning I must seek the Upper Room before I seek anything else. I have found that both my happiness and Christian usefulness depend upon this meeting with God at the very

beginning of the day." And ten years after I say, Amen.



Prayer

Eternal Christ, ever-living Presence of the Father, we praise Thee, we adore Thee, we worship Thee. We thank Thee that each night before we sleep we feel Thee near, that each morning we may greet Thee with the dawn. Blessed Presence, Comforter, and Friend, we thank Thee that we need not face the days alone; that Thou hast called us to be fellow workers with Thyself—channels of Thy grace. Indeed, the tasks are all Thine; they are not ours; without Thee we can nothing do, and with Thee we can do all things. Help us this day to keep surrendered lives, in mind and heart and will. Give us the same compassion Thou didst have, to meet the world of men. We pray that they may see that we have been with God. So give us peace and power and joy and victory today. In Jesus' name. Amen.



Clear Skies

The skies are clear!
Then let no unkind
Word of mine,
Unworthy thought,
Or selfish deed,
Break forth
To mar the beauty
Of God's world today.
My Soul, take heed!

Take heed, my soul,
Lest ere the set
Of this day's sun
Thou shouldst do ought
To cloud a day
So well begun!

I Have Tried

When I stand some day at the Judgment
And the books are all thrown open wide,
Not the deeds that I've done
Nor the laurels I've won;
Only this will I plead,
I have tried!

Aye, this be the power of my pleading
To the Judge with the hands crucified,
Not my laurels nor bars,
But the depth of my scars;
Yea, this will I plead,
I have tried!

VI

The Daily Method

OUT of the testimony of those who have "discovered God" we may learn that next to the importance of acknowledging the necessity for a daily technique is *the technique itself*.

Edward Bok inscribed at the entrance of his beautiful sanctuary in Florida: "I come here to find myself; it's so easy to get lost in the world. The world is with us too much. Getting and spending we lay waste all our powers." In these words a great soul is counseling every man on the necessity of getting alone with God. But we need to go further; we need counsel also on how to make the most of our periods of meditation and worship.

Even in our devotions a program is necessary. Here as elsewhere, "the man of method is the man of achievement." Universal experience seems to establish the following truths:

1. *The morning is the most profitable time for our daily devotional period.* In the morning the mind is refreshed and as yet undisturbed by the problems of the day. From my own experience I can say: Blessed is the man who meets God in the morning! It is regrettable that so many of us were taught to pray only once a day and then at night. It is still more unfortunate that we were not taught that food for the spirit is more important than food for the body.

2. *Preparations for the morning tryst with*

Christ should be made the night before. This may involve a rule of early or at least regular retiring. It will also mean bringing one's mind into an attitude of calmness and receptivity at the close of the evening. I have learned that it makes a great difference what I read the last thing at night. Also I find that if, before I drop off into sleep, I speak to the Father my thoughts turn joyfully and gratefully to the Presence the very instant I awake in the morning; I find Him still with me "when purple morning breaketh."

"Fairer than morning, lovelier than daylight,
Dawns the sweet consciousness, I am with Thee."

3. *Study to make your periods of devotion so vital that you will come to look forward to them with increasing eagerness.* This too will involve preparation. Meditation, Bible reading, and prayer are three essentials of a profitable period of devotion. No one of them can be omitted without loss. Coming to the "Upper Room" without a plan of procedure is confusing. A well-selected program of Scripture reading is especially important. Hit-or-miss reading of Bible passages is not the best use of time. How to begin the devotional period is an important question. Bishop Thomas Wilson wrote, "Make it a law to yourself, to meditate before you pray; as also to make pauses to see whether your heart goes with your lips."

Personally I have found it helpful, following a few moments of silent meditation, to repeat audibly from memory a brief prayer from the Psalms or the *Prayer Book*, or the stanza of a hymn.

Posture is often important; and I would emphasize the advantage of praying aloud. Just as the audible reading of poetry intensifies the meaning of the message, so the best results and the deepest appreciation of prayer are generally obtained when we hear our own voice.

4. *Don't let your "quiet time" exhaust your program of the practice of the Presence.* As Dean Farrar has said, "No soul can preserve the bloom and delicacy of its existence without lonely musings and silent prayer;" but it is also true that we were not made to live in "lonely musings." We must learn to talk with the Presence "where cross the crowded ways of life," and at any time of the day. To repeat the Lord's Prayer or some collect, or otherwise to speak with the Presence, as one moves along in a crowd will be a new and rich experience to many. Moreover, just as it is true that "nothing will help us love a man so much as praying for him," so we will find that nothing helps us to apprehend that God is in the midst of the market place like talking with Him there.

5. *Watch your reading; carefully select the best literature.* John Wesley's life was permanently impressed by reading three or four books. Others can give similar witness. The weekly religious paper is indispensable to a Christian. Especially search for devotional reading.¹

¹I have found that devotional books like Porter's *The Enrichment of Prayer*, or Bishop Leete's *Skyward: A Book of Horizons*; or Muriel Lester's *Ways of Praying*; or some book of prayer like Doctor Orchard's *The Temple*, or books of daily devotions like *The Upper Room* or *Today*, are invaluable.

6. *Determine that nothing shall interfere with your daily program of the practice of the Presence.* Remember Luther's words: "I have much to do today, so I will arise an hour earlier in order to have time for quiet prayer." If we *determine* that there shall be no exception, especially in our daily observance of the morning tryst, we shall find, even on vacations or in the "busy seasons," that the "quiet time" has become an essential part of our lives. As Dean Inge testified, "If we make our periods of devotion the most regular thing in our lives, we shall discover that they will regulate all else."

But in all of this we must not trust too much to our feelings, nor be discouraged when the barren times crowd in. "Having done all, stand!"

"When darkness hides His lovely face
I rest in His unchanging grace."

Remember Professor James's assertion that "obedience is the key to every spiritual experience." It is not by searching we find God; it is by obeying and following. I think the words of Jesus in Saint John's Gospel have been the surest guide to me through the years in this regard: "If any man will do his will, he shall know" (John 7. 17). Yes, and the promise has meant to me that he will *increasingly* know the reality of the Presence. Let me illustrate what this means to me:

There was once a boy: I knew him well. One night he knelt with other boys in a children's meeting. The pastor was saying, "Now, boys, every one of you pray. Just a sentence. Speak

to Jesus; He will speak to you." The boy heard but he was afraid to speak aloud; yet all the while he felt a pressure on his conscience urging him to speak. At last his lips opened. He prayed! Whereupon there came into his life a new consciousness of God. For the Scripture says, "*If any man will do his will, he shall know.*" And that boy knew; all the way home a gladness danced with him along the street. It seemed to be his first experience of the conscious presence of the Christ.

Then there came another day, a few years after. The boy's preacher was calling. He was asking the boy to join the Church. "Son," he said, "it is time you took your stand for Christ and showed your colors to the world." But again this timid boy said, "No." Again the voice within cried out, "Obey!" And the voice triumphed. It was one of the great mornings of his life when, all alone, that boy walked down to the altar to be baptized. And O what joy and peace! *If any man is willing to do the will of God, he shall know!* And on that Sunday morning once again the boy had a new experience of God.

A few years passed. The revival fires were burning in the preparatory school in the hills of old Vermont. The boy was alone in the dormitory room. Alone except for Christ! A voice was calling. He had heard it many times before but he had never surrendered to it. "Come and preach!" it had said. Always he had answered, "No." But now heaven seemed very near, and in that holy hour the boy threw away his fear and answered, "Yes." And again the consciousness

of the Presence became very real. *If any man is willing to do the will of God, he shall know.*

Now the college days have come. Definitely the youth is facing the ministry as his lifework. He had supposed that his heart was fully surrendered to the Lord. But one night a Student Volunteer secretary stood before the meeting of college boys, told the story of the world's vast needs and urged the claims of the Great Commission. That night the boy went to his room with heavy heart. He had discovered something that weighed hard upon his soul. He was *not* willing, if God should lead, to follow the Christ to *any* shore. For weeks the battle raged within. That youth will not forget the day, when alone upon his knees, he fought the battle to a finish, won the victory, and wrote his name under the words, "It is my purpose, if God permits, to be a missionary of the cross." Again the great truth, *If any man is willing to do the will of God, he shall know!* And once more he climbed into a new consciousness of the presence of the Christ.

And we could go on—on through more and recent chapters. But it isn't necessary. Obedience to the Voice is the condition of any comradeship with God. *If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know.* Yes, he shall know!



Prayer

Dear Christ, we are thankful that through Thee we have communion with the Father, and

through Thee we find strength to carry the burdens, face the problems, and in the heat of the day to know Thy joy.

Behind all this we thank Thee for Thy ever-patient love, pressing in upon us the increasing conviction that nothing beneath the sun can substitute for the daily consecration of our wills to God. How patiently Thou hast taught, but how slowly have we learned! How prone we are to listen to the voice of the busy world! How easily we have been lured away from the divine! But everlasting is Thy mercy, and when tempted from the altar of Thy presence Thou hast still held us with Thy loving hand. We praise Thee, we adore Thee, we worship Thee.

But, we pray Thee, let us not be deceived by any false sense of security this day; when we think we stand, help us to take heed lest we fall. Hold us fast, dear Lord; we need Thee every moment, help us to remember always that they who would renew their strength must wait upon the Lord. Amen.



The Living Word

I love Thee Lord!
 I love Thee for Thy living Word;
 I love Thee for the resting night,
 And now I love Thee for the morning light.
 I love Thee for the early breeze,
 The stirring of my poplar trees;
 The lapping of the waters on the shore;
 I love Thee for ten thousand things and more,
 When o'er my hilltop comes Thy glorious sun,
 Bringing Thy message that the day's begun.

I love Thee for it all, dear Lord,
For all I see and hear—Thy living word:
My garden laughing to the morning sky,
The flowers praying sweetly—(Why not I?)
Thy summer angels hymning from the hill,
My soul, awake, awake! And be thou still
To hear with spirit ears the living Word—
These morning greetings from thy living Lord!

VII

The Great Discovery

WE have been saying in these pages that finding God real is in the end a personal discovery which everyone must make for himself. Some guide may give us directions, may outline a helpful technique, may point out the indispensable conditions to be met before we can approach the holy of holies; but at the last the final step that makes the Great Discovery must be taken by the seeker himself.

“Alone with Thee, amid the mystic shadows,
The solemn hush of nature newly born;
Alone with Thee, in breathless adoration,
In the calm dew and freshness of the morn.”

And that final step is always the step of *faith*. This is historically the fact. Many books have been written and more are yet to come to show that the assurance of sins forgiven, and the consciousness of the God-Presence, and the increasing sense of the reality of the Unseen—all of these are, as Saint Paul insistently testified, the free gift of God by faith. “By grace are ye saved through faith” (Ephesians 2. 8).

Now, this word “grace” suggests that there is a danger of putting too much emphasis upon *our* discovery—as though it were entirely a human accomplishment. Christ would say, “You never could have found me were it not that I was seeking thee.” The point is that we make the dis-

covery of the Presence only because He reveals himself to us *after* we have put ourselves into a receiving attitude and have attained unto a prevailing faith.

"At the blest mercy seat, pleading for me,
My feeble faith looks up, Jesus, to Thee."

We need to meditate upon this truth, the truth that justification is by faith. So also in the same way is found "assurance" and "the witness of the Spirit." And it is so with all the other spiritual gifts of God: They come through faith. Because Saint Paul had made this discovery his words helped Martin Luther centuries later to find the same joyous secret during those distressing days at Rome. And years afterward when John Wesley learned the same secret at Aldersgate Street, his immediate help came also from Saint Paul through the converted German monk.

Perhaps it will help if we summarize this "secret" in these words: When we have truly repented of our sins; when we have shown by our actions a real hunger for God, so that we are willing to follow any technique or obey His every command even though it take us to the ends of the earth; and then when it dawns upon us that after we have done all we are still unprofitable servants, and any gift or revelation of Himself to us is because of His goodness and grace—not because of any merit of our own—when faith has reached this prevailing stage, then it is that "something clicks," and the clouds roll away from before His presence and the great discovery is ours! Then, and not till then, will we cry with

Job, "I had heard of thee by hearsay, but now mine eyes have seen thee." And when we finally make this discovery, there comes the realization of how patiently and how long God has been trying to reveal to us this revelation of Himself.

This suggests an experience which I heard Bishop William Fraser McDowell relate to an Annual Conference of Methodist preachers a dozen years ago. It happened at Chautauqua one night. A wonderful electrical display which had been prepared in connection with some pageant stirred the bishop to whisper to the director, "How greatly the discovery of electricity has added to the beauty of the world!"

Quickly came the response, "Yes, and I never think of it without marveling at the patience of God!"

Pulling the director outside the bishop somewhat excitedly said, "Tell me what you mean by that statement."

"Just this," was the answer, "have you never thought how patiently through the long centuries the Creator had been trying to find some Franklin who would make the discovery of the vast electrical resources waiting to be used? Think of how the Almighty had flashed His lightnings. Now He hits a tree or a house, flashes fire, and even strikes at animals and men. And apparently all in vain until that day when Franklin went out with his kite into the storm.

"Can't you picture," continued the aroused artist, "that scene? Can't you believe that the angels in heaven were anxiously leaning over the battlements hoping that now at last some human

being was going to make the discovery? Can't you hear some of them say, 'Look! Look! See! He has got it! At last!'"

I remember how vividly this picture was painted that morning in the Annual Conference in Indiana, and how tellingly the speaker brought home to our minds and hearts the patient love of God, forever offering the pentecostal gift of the Christ-Presence. And we are so slow to make the discovery!

Now, the place of faith is so central and so surely the key to all spiritual discovery that it seems strange that the grasping of this ancient truth is so difficult. We have already referred to the long earnest struggle of Martin Luther to find peace with God and the reality of the Presence. Years later Peter Böhler, the spiritual descendant of Luther, after patiently trying to lead the Wesleys into this experience of the consciousness of God, made this interesting comment: "Our mode of believing in the Saviour is so easy to Englishmen that they cannot reconcile themselves to it; if it were a little more artful, they would sooner find their way into it."

But Böhler forgot how the great Protestant reformer—a member of his own race—had traveled through the same difficult road before he finally came to the light and could make that great declaration: "My God has given to me, an unworthy, condemned man, without any merit, purely, freely and of simple mercy, through and in Christ, a perfect wealth of all goodness and blessedness; so that I henceforth require nothing more than to believe that it is so."

"In my hand no price I bring—
Simply to thy cross I cling."

It seems easy enough to sing lines like these but how many of us sang them for years before their deeper meaning finally burst in upon us! For the same reason Saint Paul is very careful to point out the secret that came to him before he could say, "I know whom I have believed." It is the secret that comes by faith in the Everlasting Love! We must never forget it: "Not having mine own righteousness, . . . but that which is through faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Philippians 3. 9).

We have spoken much in these pages of "spiritual exercises." And there is little danger of overemphasizing this necessity for our generation. Nevertheless, there is a real danger lest our so-called spiritual exercises lose their proper objective. For if our periods of devotions are merely aimed at self-discipline and self-culture, they will fail of the highest usefulness. Christ must always be the object of our seeking. Back of any worthy "quiet hour" must be a purpose to grow in nearness to Him and in greater sensitiveness to His commands and Kingdom purposes.

Instead of being an aid to faith in Christ, our periods of so-called worship sometimes serve us merely as a substitute for Christ. Indeed, they may become well-meaning attempts to establish "our own righteousness" and by "our own works" find favor with God.

One of the most discriminating passages in

John Wesley's *Journal* points out this danger. In analyzing his condition previous to his "heart-warming experience," he tells how he had worked on the theory that "much fasting and self-discipline, mental prayer and like exercises were the most effective means of purifying the soul and uniting it with God."

Then he adds: "Now, these were in truth as much my own works . . . as any I had before pursued. . . . In this refined way and trusting in my own works, and my own righteousness, I dragged heartily on."

And he continued to drag "heartily on" until at Aldersgate Street he saw the light and realized, as we all must, that all of God's good gifts of the Spirit are received through faith alone—faith in God's ever-seeking love, faith in Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord.

"Just as I am, Thy love unknown
Hath broken every barrier down;
Now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come!"

So, while spiritual exercises are indispensable, these will help us all the sooner if we see clearly that the exercises themselves can do nothing more than to dispose our minds and hearts to receive the strengthening Presence. Power comes not from the exercises but from Him who said, "Without me ye can do nothing." Spiritual power is the gift of the Christ-Spirit who dwells in prepared and surrendered hearts. Spiritual exercises can indeed keep us healthily hungry, but it was Christ who said, "I am the bread of life."

But how long it takes some of us to learn! How long the road stretched out before we arrived at the place where faith lives, and learned what faith means! And then the discovery that God was there—that He had been there all along! Did not our hearts burn within us as He walked with us? Think of it: God with us!—God in Christ, the Unseen Presence, Reality! As Pascal wrote: “Certainty! Fire! Joy! Peace! I forgot the world and everything but God. Righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee.” Even so, dear Lord, Amen.



Prayer

Eternal God, can a man by searching find Thee? O how wonderfully Thou hast found us! Men have always believed that Thou wert ready to receive us, but now we know that Thou didst go forth searching for us, calling to us, patiently waiting, until we should repent of our blindness and sin and come back to God, to holiness, to joyfulness, and life.

We thank Thee for Jesus Christ our Lord. We thank Thee for the revelation that He brings. We thank Thee for the story of His birth, for the godly men who foresaw Thy gift from heaven, for the angel announcement, for the superb and lovely way in which He came—for all the tales that tell Thy world-old love. O how amazing that while men are reaching out for Thee that Thou art seeking after them!

Is it our sin that has made us blind? Forgive us, Lord! Forgive us that we have thought that we could have the comfort and security and the riches of Thy Presence without repenting of our disobedience, our unrighteousness, our lack of love. O God, whom only the pure in heart can see, whom only those can truly love who hate the evil things, take not Thy holy Spirit from us. O that our eyes may see and our ears may hear, and that our feet may be strong to walk the ways of God! Through Jesus Christ our Lord we pray. Amen.



Without Him?

When that inevitable hour shall come,
When shadows all have lengthened
To the end, lights all are dim,
What will you do, my soul,
In that great hour of waiting
Without Him?

Yea, without Him, who was in the beginning;
Who flung the morning stars upon their way;
Yea, without Him, the light, the life eternal,
Who watches to the closing of each day?

"Come unto me," He cries;
Oh, if I fail him,
And shadows grow,
And lengthen to the end,
And lights are dim,
What will you do, my soul,
In that great hour of waiting
Without Him?

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